DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 384 784	CE 069 471
TITLE	Writing Our Practice. Support Documents for the Reading & Writing and the Oral Communication Streams of the "Certificates of General Education for Adults within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework."
INSTITUTION	Adult, Community, and Further Education Board, Melbourne (Australia).
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-7306-7477-0
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	257p.; For the accreditation framework, see ED 372 180.
AVAILABLE FROM	ARIS, National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia, GPO Box 372F, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia ($25 Australian plus postage).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC11 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; *Case Studies; *Curriculum Development; Educational Theories; English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; History Instruction; Law Related Education; *Literacy Education; Teacher Developed Materials
IDENTIFIERS	*Certificates of General Educ Adults (Australia); Workplace Literacy

ABSTRACT

This collection of 14 articles focuses on the Reading and Writing and Oral Communication Streams of the Certificates of General Education (CGE) for Adults in the context of literacy teaching practices. Section 1 contains 11 case studies and articles with a practical focus. Practitioners discuss aspects of their curriculum development related to the CGE for Adults. Articles include the following: "Level 1 or What: Placing a Student" (Margaret Simonds); "Making It Explicit: Students Use the Four Literacies" (Louise Wignall); "If I Only Had Time...Curriculum Planning" (Barbara Lorey, Robiny Stricker, Hugh Kiernan); "Critical Literacy: Developing an Australian History Curriculum" (Pat Forward); "Literacy as Legal Action: Developing a Legal Studies Curriculum" (Julie McQueen); "A Text Up-Close: Using 'The World of Work' in the CGE for Adults" (Pam Baker); "Making the Connections: Explaining CGE for Adults to Students" (Sara Lyons); "Curriculum at Work: Four Literacies in a Workplace Class" (Kaye Elias); "Workplace Education: Which Literacies?" (Jude Newcombe); "A Window on Thought: Talking Texts into Meaning" (Liz Suda); and "From Heart to Head: Using Koori Culture as a Theme in Teaching Non-English Speaking Background Women" (Barbara Goulborn). Section 2 consists of three articles that bring together both curriculum development and theoretical reflections on language and literacy practice for adult learners: "Oracy through Literacy: Literacy through Oracy" (Philip McIntyre); "From Fill-Ins to Foundations: Changing Views of Literacy" (Delia Bradshaw); and "Different Angles: Thinking through the Four Literacies" (Rob McCormack). (YLB)

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Adult Education in
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Writing Our Practice

Support documents for the Reading & Writing and the Oral Communication streams of the ***Certificates of General Education for Adults within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework***

Writing Our Practice - Support documents for the Reading & Writing and the Oral Communication streams of the Certificates of General Education for Adults within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework

ISBN 0 7306 7477 0

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The material in this publication does not necessarily reflect the policy of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board.

This Adult Literacy and Basic Education project was funded by the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Victoria.

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Abbreviations used

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ACFE	Adult, Community and Further Education
ALBE	Adult Literacy and Basic Education
ARIS	Adult Basic Education Resource and Information Service
ASLPR	Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating
CAE	Council of Adult Education
CAT	Common Assessment Task
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CGE	Certificates of General Education for Adults
CGE for Adults	*Certificates of General Education for Adults within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework*, 1993
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
ESB	English-speaking Background
ESL	English as a Second Language
PTC	Public Transport Corporation
SIP	Special Intervention Program
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TOP	Tertiary Orientation Program
VAELLNAF	Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
WBE	Workplace Basic Education

Introduction

Welcome to ***Writing Our Practice: Support documents for the Reading & Writing and the Oral Communication Streams of the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGE for Adults) within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF)***.

Writing Our Practice has been divided into two sections. In Section One, practitioners discuss aspects of their curriculum development, relating this to the *CGE for Adults*. Section Two consists of three articles which bring together both curriculum development and theoretical reflections on language and literacy practice for adult learners.

The Project Managers and practitioners who discuss their work in this text hope it will help you develop curriculum in relation to the Reading & Writing and Oral Communication Streams of the *Certificates of General Education for Adults within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework*. The Accreditation Framework is a set of generic competencies at four levels across four streams of reading and writing, oral communication, numerical and mathematical concepts, and general curriculum options. *Writing Our Practice*, however, is only concerned with two of these streams: Reading & Writing, and Oral Communication.

Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework

	STREAMS			
Level 4	Reading & Writing 4	Oral Communication 4	Numerical & Mathematical Concepts 4	General Curriculum Option 4
Level 3	Reading & Writing 3	Oral Communication 3	Numerical & Mathematical Concepts 3	General Curriculum Option 3
Level 2	Reading & Writing 2	Oral Communication 2	Numerical & Mathematical Concepts 2	General Curriculum Option 2
Level 1	Reading & Writing 1	Oral Communication 1	Numerical & Mathematical Concepts 1	General Curriculum Option 1

To complete a Certificate of General Education for Adults (Foundation), students must complete the following eight modules.

Certificate of General Education for Adults (Foundation)

Level 2	Reading & Writing 2	Oral Communication 2	Numerical & Mathematical Concepts 2	General Curriculum Option 2
Level 1	Reading & Writing 1	Oral Communication 1	Numerical & Mathematical Concepts 1	General Curriculum Option 1

Students may obtain a Certificate of General Education for Adults if they complete the modules of a particular stream. In this case the credential is listed with the stream mentioned in brackets. For example, if a student after having satisfied the conditions for gaining the Certificate of General Education for Adults (Foundation) then continues on with the two further modules corresponding to Levels 3 and 4 within the Oral Communication Stream, he or she would fulfil the requirements for the Certificate of General Education (Oral Communication).

Certificate of General Education for Adults (Oral Communication)

Level 4		Oral Communication 4		
Level 3		Oral Communication 3		
Level 2	Reading & Writing 2	Oral Communication 2	Numerical & Mathematical Concepts 2	General Curriculum Option 2
Level 1	Reading & Writing 1	Oral Communication 1	Numerical & Mathematical Concepts 1	General Curriculum Option 1

Grappling with the new

For a fuller background context, language and literacy practitioners should refer to the document *Certificates of General Education for Adults within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework* published in 1993 by the Office of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and the Office of the State Training Board, Melbourne. (This is the document which is referred to in brief throughout *Writing Our Practice* as *CGE for Adults*.)

This project (*Writing Our Practice*) was funded by the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and the State Training Board in 1992. As a consortium made up of the Council of Adult Education, Victoria University of Technology (TAFE) and Western Metropolitan College of TAFE, we were given responsibility for both the design and the management of this curriculum project. Our task was to develop and write a series of curriculum documents for language and literacy practitioners which would enable teachers and co-ordinators to use the Reading & Writing and Oral Communication competencies of the CGE for Adults confidently and easily across a range of learning conditions and contexts. As you read *Writing Our Practice,* we hope it will provide you with a better understanding of the Reading & Writing and Oral Communication streams of the Accreditation Framework. *Writing Our Practice* aims to reflect the many and varied approaches educators bring to their everyday activities and interactions in the classroom and to show how these relate to the Accreditation Framework.

—The Project Managers

Section One

Case Studies

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Level 1 or what?

Placing a Student

Margaret Simonds

Assessment and placement of students in adult literacy classes is both a commonplace activity and at the same time a challenge to Adult Basic Education workers. It is essential to assess a student's skills for educational placement in a class, and it is here that the competencies of the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework are relevant.

Margaret Simonds describes her experience in assessing and placing a student in a full-time program at Wimmera Community College of TAFE, and describes the educational strategies which were successful with this student.

She emphasises that the assessment must be done in a manner sensitive to the dignity of the individual being interviewed. It is vitally important to place a student in a learning situation in which she or he can experience success.

The dyslexia song—and learning difficulties

I meet lots of 'people with dyslexia'. For someone who has been involved with Adult Literacy for a long time, the word 'dyslexia' is inclined to cause an internal cringe, raise a cynical smirk or at least the feeling of 'Oh no, not again!'

The main problem for the practitioner is the overuse and misuse of the term—especially a term which is itself vague in definition. It would appear to have been sufficiently impressive-sounding to have been used over the last decade as a label for all sorts of learning difficulties and as an 'explanation' for not learning.

I have been told by one student during an initial interview that he was 'dyslexic in the left eye'. I can't remember what my reaction was to this fascinating statement, or even if I could ask for an explanation.

This is one reason why I like to interview and assess each potential student before placement. Other reasons include suitable placement, discovery of specific learning difficulties and students' own wishes and desired outcomes.

Dyslexia on the loose

I have lost count of the number of students who have arrived on my doorstep saying, 'I was told to come and see you because I've got dyslexia'. I wish I could give a snappy reply along the lines of 'Take two aspirin and come back next week when it's gone away'. Generally in these cases the diagnosis has been made by family member, friends, Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) staff, workmates, or an employer, and can mean anything from poor spelling to general lack of interest in reading fiction.

As I tell the student during the initial interview that it's not a test, but I need to know where they are in terms of the levels of the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF), if there are any barriers to learning which we have to overcome, and things like their preference for time, place and 'vocational outcomes'. Nice jargon term that—I actually ask the students what they would like to be doing in six months or two years.

Identifying barriers, if any, to learning can often be a reassuring experience for the student. So many people with poor skills have come to think of themselves as 'dumb'. Discovering a visual problem or an auditory memory problem can take the focus away from 'dumb' or 'stupid' and move it to something which can be overcome. It also gives me some indication for the tutor or teacher. A student with an auditory figure/ground problem is not going to perform very well when the road outside the classroom is being broken up.

Introducing Susie

In explanation I'd like to introduce you to Susie, to look at her background, her initial assessment, her placement and how she relates to the Accreditation Frameworks and the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGE for Adults).

Susie arrived in our largish country town from an interstate capital city. She is here to get away from a boyfriend who was apparently causing some problems. Her parents are from central Europe, and she comes in the middle of a large family, born in Australia, who all have similar difficulties with literacy.

The local CES office referred her to me as the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) assessor, and I saw her in their office as she didn't know her way around town. Susie is in her early twenties and has had factory work in the past.

Initial interview

During the initial interview/assessment it became obvious that she could sign her name but not write her address. From a piece of text, the only word she recognised was 'the'. She appeared to have no eye tracking or focusing problems, and her hearing was within normal range. Susie did quite well on two Short Term Auditory Memory tests but although using the right letters, got them out of sequence. She indicated she has trouble with letter reversals.

At this stage you are into the assessment from hell. You are faced with a bright, expectant, desperate subject, unable to find why she didn't learn, you are looking at entry Level 1, and wishing you had chosen another career path because your own inadequacies in this situation are becoming overwhelming.

Look at the strengths:

- Susie is articulate. She has good verbal skills, she can explain to you that she finds her situation embarrassing, that she hides the problem as much as she can, and that she freezes when she is faced with a form:
- Susie is unemployed. That's a strength in this case because it gives you time;
- Susie is optimistic. She is not yet at the stage of thinking her case is hopeless; and
- Susie wants to learn, and thinks she can. (The only trouble is that she's relying on you to teach her.)

After the initial panic feeling dies down, the next stage is to look at the options available. These will depend on several factors and may include geography, funding, time, provider availability, support structures and most importantly, the aims of the particular student.

Susie has indicated that she would like to be a hairdresser. This, although impossible at this stage, is something to record and tuck away as useful information. It indicates that she is probably good with her hands and that she may have a creative streak which could be exploited as a strength.

Where best to place Susie

Because Susie was unemployed, the obvious choice for her was a full time program which allowed her to try a variety of subjects. The Wimmera Community College of TAFE has for several years been conducting Return to Study, a 20 hour a week, year-long course which will mould itself quite well into the CGE for Adults. Return to Study, like similar TAFE College courses, generally caters for **Level 3 and 4** students who may move on to Business Studies, Accounting, Child Care, Adult VCE or Welfare courses.

There is no separate, full-time course in this part of the State for **Level 1 and 2** students, as their numbers are too small and they are too widely spread across the region. The only provision has been one-to-one tutoring, either with a volunteer tutor or a paid teacher under Special Intervention Program (SIP) funding.

With some reservations I placed Susie in Return to Study for the following reasons:

- she had the time;
- she had support services available in a TAFE College;
- she needed to make friends in her new town; and
- the expertise and support of various teachers was available.

Simple things like enrolment had to be overcome. I had a quick chat to brief the Enrolment Officer beforehand. I was there to support Susie when she enrolled. To others in the room it was a normal enrolment and Susie signed her name on the form like everyone else.

The Return to Study course

Return to Study contains English, Maths, Introduction to Computers, Personal Development and a choice of either Australian Society or an Art and Design subject. Susie, with a slight nudge, chose the Art and Design subject, which this semester is Ceramics—entirely practical, no reading, and tests out the creative theory.

Susie had no experience of **computers**, and I sent her off to her first class in some trepidation. I sent my assistant with her—I wanted someone who knew computers to gauge her reactions in this class and to assess her chances of participating. Prior discussion with the teacher had put him on his mettle, and Susie coped extremely well—she is learning computer functions by copying text, and has quickly learnt adequate keyboard skills. Once Susie realised that she would not be suddenly faced with text and expected to read it, she relaxed and could concentrate on the skills.

Personal Development, with a teacher who is also a counsellor, proved to be enjoyable for Susie. Once the teacher was aware of the problem, Susie could participate in a class fully (probably for the first time). The other students—mainly female—had the same sort of difficulties learning to participate in this subject and this put Susie on an equal footing in the group. She found that being able to expose what she thought of as a shameful secret was only her problem and everyone else had their own problem.

Maths, or numeracy, was always going to be rather difficult. However Susie knew numbers and had an understanding of basic operations. The maths teacher made it clear to her in the first lesson that she could ask for his assistance at any time. As her attitude to maths was shared by the rest of the female students, the pressure to hide away was removed. Susie will now say 'Could you explain that again please', and will sometimes interrupt the explanation to say 'Yes, I understand that'. She knows that any reading contained in maths exercises will be read to her, and that asking for assistance is the norm and is expected.

(I know we haven't got to the Literacy/English area yet, but bear with me, there's more I need to know too.)

Looking Further—Susie's situation

The invisible girl

Further probing into Susie's school time revealed nothing. She claims that she had received no extra help and she had sat in a classroom, invisible, for ten years. When I asked if she had ever had any further tests she replied, 'Only the ones you gave me'. This reply staggered me as I had conducted very simple eye-tracking and focusing tests in the initial interview. I contacted my friendly local optometrist to conduct further tests on Susie. She had agreed to this and was quite keen to participate.

The first appointment was for a straightforward vision check. As I suspected, there was no problem here and nothing had to be done. Further testing covered visual memory and there was an obvious problem here. Susie's visual memory was poor, as was auditory memory.

Self-esteem and childhood trauma

One comment the optometrist made in our later discussion was that 'her self-esteem is so low that she's sure she can do nothing'. We as practitioners become so used to dealing with low self-esteem in our students that we forget that other people, dealing with the general public, find it unusual. So much of our work, apart from the practical skills side, has to go into reprogramming the 'on board computer'. Students are expecting to fail, and often don't know how to deal with success.

As it now appears that sight and hearing are not Susie's strengths on the pathway to learning, I need more information. In this case there appears to be something wrong with the processing in the mind, but I don't know what. As teachers we know very little about brain function—I need to know more about Susie's perceptual cognitive abilities. A private speech pathologist or consultant may be able to give me more information.

He found that Susie's learning was severely affected by a major trauma when she was five. The family home caught fire, and Susie and her siblings were all burnt in varying degrees of severity. Susie was unconscious for some time, probably due to smoke inhalation (my guess) and spent several months in hospital undergoing treatment of her burns and skin grafts. Spells in hospital continued until the age of twelve.

Anomia and hauling in the word

The consultant feels that the period of unconsciousness has probably led to a particular learning difficulty called 'anomia', which means difficulty in recalling the exact word needed. For example, in one test using a picture of a kitchen, Susie called the sink a 'bowl'. She could not, at the time, recall the right word, although as she explained to me later, she knew that *'bowl'* was not correct.

An example of this in my lesson recently was the following exchange about a picture of an anchor among other more common objects.

> Margaret: Can you tell me the name of this?
> Susie: Er, it's a thing that ships have on the front, to make them stop.
> Margaret: To stop them while they're going along?
> Susie: No, no, they use it when the engine is stopped.
> Margaret: Well, why do they need it then?
> Susie: Because currents in the sea or the wind might move them. This goes down to the bottom.
> Margaret: The word begins with A.
> Susie: Of course, it's an anchor.

As you can see, there is nothing wrong with Susie's intelligence, but she has trouble recalling the exact word she wants. Most of us do it occasionally, but to Susie it happens constantly. To compensate for this 'word search' problem she will avoid unusual or longer words and talk around the word, usually in very simple sentences.

The approach for Susie

While all this is happening however, Susie has begun her program, and the decision has been made to keep her out of English class. Class attendance in this area is too threatening to her, so she will work with the Study Skills teacher with me helping when possible. This will amount to four or five hours per week.

The Study Skills teacher and I brainstormed ideas for Susie's program, and kept in mind the Framework—I had thoroughly enjoyed my involvement as a consultant in the Framework process but this case needed concentration on specific areas.

For practical purposes, Susie needed to be able to write her address. She came on the first day with it written in a little pocket book, but she wanted the independence of writing the address without continually referring to her book.

I decided we would begin all new writing attempts in very large letters on the whiteboard and that Susie would trace the writing until she felt confident to copy it herself. The words to trace were at least 40 cm high, although Susie's copy could be smaller. In this way the hand would learn the 'feel' of the word, and the large arm movement should impress on the brain. 'Feeling' the word would also be continued by writing (with the finger!) on the carpet, closing the eyes and trying, and in any way in which the shape of the writing becomes automatic. You, readers of this publication, write your address this way; you don't consciously think of every letter—the address just comes out the end of the pen—it's learnt behaviour.

It worked! Within two sessions Susie could write her address. 'Write' is the important word here—letter reversals don't occur in writing, they may occur in printing. We had explained to Susie that some of the things we would be doing may appear a little weird, but she was willing to try. This stage lasted only a few weeks.

Susie then wanted to learn to write *'Australia'*. This took longer, as the word is much more complex. Form-filling is a major problem for Susie, so we will continue with this program to cover these practical purposes.

What else?

Ask the student what words she needs to know? Prepare a list with the student. This list may be related to one aspect only such as words needed for forms, or may be other survival material, such as road signs. Use these words in all sorts of ways: Cloze, sentence endings, flash card etc. Use a visual clue or mnemonic if needed. Keep visually similar words such as *'well'* and *'will'* apart.

With Susie we need to use lots of visual activities to point out subtle differences—try 'Spot the Difference' games and pictures. Make sure the student can describe the difference orally as well as merely carry out a visual check. Teach students to listen well, they often haven't learnt to be careful listeners.

Teach locational skills: it's useful to know where letters come in the alphabet. This will assist in using reference books, phone books and road maps. Susie also needs to learn to read bus and tram timetables to enable her to become more mobile and independent.

Ensure students know various meanings of words. My favourite example is *'tan'* where it can mean a process, a colour or, colloquially, a beating.

Constantly look out for materials you can use. In Susie's case we found things to use in the following:

- Local newspaper
- Women's magazines
- Phone books
- Junk mail
- Supermarket specials sheets.

As Susie's computer skills increased, we found we could prepare work for her on the computer and leave her to access it, or she could key in her own material.

Susie and the four domains

Having four domains within the Reading and Writing and Oral Communication streams of VAELLNAF is a useful reminder to all practitioners to ensure that the reasons why literacy is needed are kept in mind. If we ask ourselves the question 'Why does Susie need to be literate?', we find the answers there.

- Susie needs to be literate for **Self Expression**.
  At Level 1, this means she should be able to write one or two sentences recounting a simple personal activity, idea or experience. Are we teaching her this? Yes, by giving her the words she needs, and by allowing her to use the tape-recorder for us to transcribe.
- She needs to demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple narrative or literary text. Yes, by using the local paper or women's magazines and discussing the text, Susie is demonstrating this.
- Susie needs to be literate for **Practical Purposes**.
  At Level 1 this means she can write a simple practical text of one or more sentences, and can demonstrate meaning has been gained from reading a similar practical text. Use of the bus timetables covers this.
- Susie needs to be literate for **Knowledge**.
  At Level 1 this means she can write several facts about a familiar or personal subject, and can demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple reference or informative text. Yes, we are using junk mail to teach this area.

- And Susie needs to be literate for **Public Debate**.
  At Level 1 this means she can write a statement of opinion on a familiar matter and can demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple persuasive text. Yes, we are teaching Susie these things through the use of discussion topics or local issues.

Strategies that worked

In the area of self-expression, Susie will need an alternative to writing. We decided to use one of her strengths, her good verbal skills, to dictate whatever she wanted onto the tape recorder and we would have it transcribed for her. She probably won't be able to read it back again yet, but the tape will make her order her thoughts, as writers should. A quick lesson on the tape recorder—remember she can't read the words on the controls—and away she went. It's important that the tape-recorder has a pause button to avoid the annoying clicks of continual stop/start recording. Susie was a bit threatened by the process at first, so we sent her into an interview room on her own to start proceedings.

Putting lesson instructions on tape—a bit like the old 'Mission Impossible'—forces a student to really listen.

The tape recorder will also be used to put books onto tape. I have already recorded *The Poseidon Adventure* (Longman, Movie World Easy Reading Edition), which was Susie's choice—she had seen the movie. I wanted her to listen to the tape, read the book and also 'read' out aloud all at the same time. She took the tape home with her, but said that it was too hard to read aloud with the tape. I'll try this 'live' by reading the same text simultaneously with her. I may have read too fast on the tape—I'll try the variable speed tape recorder, and see if slowing down the tape will work.

With reference to the levels of the CGE for Adults, it's important to remember that text at Level 1 does not have to be restricted to Nip and Fluff, Dick and Dora type stuff. (Whoever thought up those names?) In fact I'm inclined to think of it as a form of benign censorship if we determine that certain things are too hard for our students. It's up to us as teachers to find the solution to enable our students to engage with more advanced or difficult texts.

It's also obvious, isn't it, that a student is not working or operating only at one level even within one domain. Susie may not be able to write her story yet, but she can compose several paragraphs on a chosen topic. This is why the moderation process will be so important as we implement the CGE for Adults.

Susie's Personal Development teacher has just come to tell me, with great delight, about a presentation Susie made in class. Susie had to talk for ten minutes about a subject of her own choice, and she chose Relaxation and Stress Management. She had a tape and music, and got the other students to go through the exercises. (Susie practised on me first— felt a bit of a dill lying on the floor in my office tightening and then relaxing different parts of my body.)

Apparently Susie also talked openly in this same session about her learning difficulties and how this has made her feel in society. The other students in Return to Study are very supportive and caring, and this will help her in expressing her feelings and realising that admitting the problem is part way to overcoming it.

The big questions still remain. How far can we get with Susie? What can we give her in terms of her learning needs?

Various constraints

We are bound by several constraints. Firstly, Return to Study is currently a 34-week course (680 hours). Susie has a limit on her time and participation because of her unemployment status. Although there is a nominal time of 80 hours placed on completion of each level in the document *CGE for Adults*, in cases like Susie's there will be more time needed to complete some of these levels, specifically in the Reading and Writing area. As practitioners we must be prepared to negotiate with our local DEET office on behalf of those students who don't fit neatly into a 'training package'. (In this overwhelming talk of Training, whatever happened to Education? Or am I a voice in the wilderness in more ways than one?)

Although Susie was healed medically, her education was obviously severely disrupted, especially at the crucial stage of beginning her formal education. Continuing spells in hospital, even with some teaching within the hospital, have meant that Susie really missed out on most of her primary schooling. Starting secondary school education must have been like suddenly having lessons entirely in Mandarin or Ancient Egyptian—impossible to penetrate. No wonder she sat in the classroom hoping no one would notice her.

As a measure of her slowly growing confidence, Susie has decided she would like to get her driver's licence. This is something to use as a text for her lessons.

Let's not forget that Susie has a life away from class, and what is happening there will also have a major influence on her learning. At the moment Susie is having problems with her boarding arrangements and arrived for a lesson recently in a rather distressed state. It became obvious as the lesson progressed that this matter was of overwhelming concern to her, and the planned lesson had to be abandoned. As I advise my tutors and teachers: listen and support, but then seek outside help if the problem has to be dealt with. Let the student make the decisions; we can't be permanently there with the life raft.

I find it hard sometimes to take my own advice because I am always aware of the sense of so much to do, so little time to do it. Susie has been with us now for three months; that's 240 hours gone! and we've gotta have *measurable outcomes*! Someone else wants Student Contact Hours. Someone else says she has to look for a job. But will I even have a job next year?

At the same time as you are working your way around the Accreditation Framework (and hopefully up it) you still have other areas to work on which differ with every student. In Susie's case the difficulty is the sense of shame that kept her invisible in school and the panic which overtakes her in any situation, if she feels threatened by text. Susie has to learn to control the panic which has the effect of making her go blank—a similar reaction of some people to tests or exams. As with most Level 1 students, Susie knows a lot more than she realises or admits, but the panic makes knowledge inaccessible to her if she feels threatened.

Happy endings, or, To be continued

There are no fairy-tale endings in Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) work. Since I finished her story Susie has disappeared. The maniac hunting her found out where she was living so she ran without letting anyone know. I hope she re-enrols in another course somewhere. If she turns up in yours, give her my regards.

Making it explicit

Students use the four literacies

Louise Wignall

As Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) practitioners we constantly face the challenge in the classroom of having a plan and being forced to abandon it! The varying demands and needs of our students constantly force us to evaluate our pre-planning. In planning and running a newly formed full-time Basic Education course at the Council of Adult Education in 1992, the Competence Statements of the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework were invaluable. They provided a checklist of the minimal requirements of a curriculum without being too prescriptive or limiting, and when I became derailed in my initial plans they provided a stable reference point.

What follows is a deconstruction of the planning, creation and development of an English curriculum using the Competence Statements.

The new course and its aims

I was employed on an 0.4 basis to teach the English component of the curriculum as well as to provide a Student Support service. My co-worker, Mary Pyle, was employed 0.5 to co-ordinate the course and teach the Mathematics and Study Skills curriculum.

The aim of this new course at the Council of Adult Education was:

> to give students a wide range of educational experiences that would enable them to make effective choices in accessing further education, training and employment options (Pyle & Wignall 1992).

We anticipated that students would enter the course at just pre-exit Level 2 of the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF) and that they would work through Level 3 into Level 4. The basic time structure was a twenty hour by 26-week course commencing in late April and finishing in early December 1992. Core areas of study were planned for English, Maths and Study Skills with the addition of some general subjects subject to student choice, such as Psychology, Australian Studies, Environmental Studies.

We were piloting a course that would issue a certificate based on each student's attendance as well as completion of key pieces of work across all subject areas. In order to track our development we created a structure for reporting and assessment that focused on student/tutor evaluation. A series of evaluation forms were devised that addressed student progress as well as course content. Our objective was to create a pilot program that was capable of adapting to students' needs. We found we had a great deal of flexibility within the guidelines set by our funding and the existing resources of our department and once the course started adjusted our plans to match the changing group dynamics.

Setting up the course

In setting up the course, the first areas we addressed were establishing likely student needs and publicising the new course. Information leaflets were sent to Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) offices, Adult Learning Centres, other Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) providers and libraries. Existing Council of Adult Education (CAE) Basic Education classes were also notified of the new course and the inner Melbourne CES offices were contacted by phone.

Criteria for selection

1. Language skills to be around VAELLNAF exit Level 2.
2. Maths skills (often poorer) to be above numeracy Level 1.
3. Clear or developing educational or vocational goals.
4. A commitment to full-time study.
5. Unemployed. As a result of the funding agreement a minimum 50% of students enrolled were to be CES Newstart clients.
6. Suitability to join a mixed gender group with a wide range of ages, abilities and backgrounds.

Interviews

Prospective students made initial contact by phone. At this time we explained course details and set up joint interview times. Students filled in an assessment form which partially formed the basis for selection. The interview concentrated on a discussion with the adults about their educational and vocational aims, their ability to commit themselves to full-time study and their own assessment of their strengths and weaknesses.

The interview process was crucial in the planning process as it enabled us to translate our general goals and expectations into a form that would serve a specific group of students. Most students interviewed expressed the desire for a course where they could learn in a way that 'wasn't like school'. Many felt unsure about their ability to learn due to negative past experiences and long-term unemployment.

Returning to study

From these responses it became clear that there was a need for an orientation period where we could introduce students to the concept of returning to study as an adult. We planned to include course content that would develop students' confidence and decision-making skills. As part of this process we asked students to choose in order of preference from a number of possible areas of study. The majority chose Psychology followed by Australian Studies; these two then became the first additional subjects to be included in our program (see Course Structure).

Student profile

As at mid-April of the year twenty-eight adults had been interviewed. Seventeen entered the course. Two of these students came from other CAE Return to Study classes. The unsuccessful applicants were redirected into other more suitable courses by the Education Officers in the Return to Study Department. The table below records the profile of the seventeen students who enrolled.

Benefits		**Age**	
Newstart clients	53%	20-25	53%
Pension	41%	26-35	29%
Job Search	6%	36-45	18%
Sex		**Highest school level**	
Female	59%	Year 8	24%
		Year 9	34%
Male	41%	Year 10	24%
		Year 11	18% *

* students had not completed the year

Ten students completed the course, with nine obtaining a certificate of successful completion. All these students applied for further study.

Seven students did not complete the course. These students left at varying times throughout the year for the following reasons:

3	gained employment
2	entered other courses
2	left for personal reasons.

Course structure

20 hours x 26 weeks

Students worked Monday to Thursday from 9.45 to 3.30 with half an hour to three-quarters of an hour for the lunch break.

Subjects offered

The core subjects were English, Maths and Accessing and Interpreting Information (A.I.I.).These core subjects made up the first 16 hours of weekly study.

English	7.5 hrs per week	x 26 weeks
Maths	6.0 hrs per week	
A.I.I.	2.5 hrs per week	

In addition, students studied a series of other subjects with specialist tutors who came into the program on a sessional basis every five weeks. All students were involved in choosing the subjects from the range available at the CAE. We called these 'Introduction to . . .' subjects, as we hoped to expose students to a variety of areas of study so that they might choose to extend their knowledge of any of them through further study.

1.	Psychology	4.0 hrs per week x 5 weeks for each subject
2.	Australian Studies	
3.	Vocational & course planning, assertiveness & communication skills	
4.	Environmental studies	
5.	Art practical & appreciation	
6.	Computers (a brief intensive program was included in the final 2 weeks)	

Assessment & reporting

- Students kept a weekly journal documenting their learning process.
- For each subject the students were expected to produce a project and/or essay or oral presentation, to be assessed by the tutor.
- For each subject the students completed a self-evaluation sheet reflecting on their progress and course content.
- Each term students completed a self-evaluation on their overall progress.
- Each term the students were given a written or verbal report from the tutors.
- The students constantly given feedback on their work.
- At the end of the course the students received a certificate or statement of attendance and a report detailing their year's progress.

The course in action

To give you a sense of how the course developed and how I had to adjust my program as we went along, here is an extract from my journal for the ninth week of the course:

Week 9 **Wednesday afternoon**

As I turned to the board to demonstrate the use of the possessive apostrophe yet one more time, I felt the students' deteriorating focus collapse into a mass of shuffles, giggles and chatter. A paper plane clattered against the whiteboard and I had the scary feeling that I'd never left Secondary teaching - I was stuck in Year 9 purgatory!

What I'd hoped would be a `miscellaneous revision of punctuation', according to my planning notes of the day, had been dashed from the beginning. I was already harbouring a secret fear that this punctuation lesson was going to be dry and boring when I entered class and found a young dog sniffing about under the tables. Some prearranged swap was under way between two of my students but the pooch's uninvited presence immediately put my back up.

I've had a fear and loathing of animals in class ever since a really tough girl brought her horse into my Drama room in my high school teaching days. I took a deep breath and turned back to the class just in time to see a pet rat disappear down the shirt of the dog owner. What followed is best described by my students as `The day Louise cracked up!'

At the time I thought of this lesson as a rock bottom failure - it seemed I was repeating all my mistakes from the past but I see in retrospect it was a turning point. My evaluation notes from that day read: `Disrupted and frustrating lesson due to a few students' behaviour. A dog/rat in class. Paper planes etc. Lack of focus. Much anger from me. Rethink approach!'

Amazing how understated one can be in a crisis, isn't it?

Here is my plan and post-class reflection for the next day:

GOAL	SKILLS	CLASS ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES	EVALUATION (Written after class)
• To lift mood & attitude of class from yesterday • To introduce writing for differing purposes as fun and achievable	• Writing within a time limit • Writing in a range of styles and voices • Sharing writing with others	• *Writer's Roulette*: - Series of cards with differing topics - Students choose randomly & write on topic for 2 mins. • After ten rounds, students break into groups and share responses, looking at similarities of approach, style, ease, difficulty.	• Much better mood & concentration • Fun activity • Introduced 4 domains from Curric. model

In fact, my evaluation as presented above is also understated. I had come up with the title *Writer's Roulette* for one class activity because it sounded catchy but I also like that 'life and death' connotation. It seems the subconscious always maintains a sense of humour.

Writer's Roulette

Students are given a card and spend 3 mins. writing on that topic. At the end of each 3 mins. students swap cards. At least 10 rounds of writing are completed. Students share responses and then begin to categorise their writing into the four literacy domains.

My topics were:

- How do you clean your teeth?
- You're a goldfish in a dentist's surgery waiting room. Describe your day.
- The best neighbour I ever had was . . .
- You are a customer in a bank. There has just been a holdup. Describe the thief to the police.
- Write out a recipe you like.
- How would I find a book on Toads in the library?
- Should smoking be banned in the workplace?
- What did you eat on the weekend?
- Write an ad for underarm deodorant.
- Describe your favourite piece of clothing.
- What is your opinion about eating kangaroo meat?
- The best toy I ever had was . . .
- Write a set of instructions for tying shoelaces.
- Write a list of foods beginning with each letter of the alphabet.

Introducing the four literacy domains

In addition to being engaging, enjoyable and getting me out of a trough, this particular lesson was important because it was one that directly exposed students to the idea of the four literacy domains as presented by 'Curriculum Model for Reading and Writing' (*CGE for Adults*, pp. 127-169). What is not documented in my notes is that once students were divided into groups and had begun their discussion I drew up a simple circular representation of the four literacies: Self Expression, Public Debate, Knowledge and Practical Purposes.

As part of the group exercise, students then classified each of the writing tasks into a domain. What followed was a vigorous debate about some pieces of writing not fitting neatly into one domain. Without having seen the document the students were demanding a revision of my simplistic diagram to one more closely resembling that from the Curriculum Model document. Students had discovered for themselves that 'whilst the focus within each literacy is primarily on Self Expression or Practical Skills or Knowledge or Public Debate, each of the literacy areas often contains resonances of the other three' (*CGE for Adults*, p. 137).

We were up and away! From this lesson on the students became very interested in discussing the four literacies. I was challenged by this because I was still grappling with the finer points myself, but I was pleased to see students demonstrating an ability and enthusiasm for analysis and exposing structure, as this had been one of my first term planning objectives.

First term planning

My first term planning had developed around the structure of our timetable that gave me 2 three-hour and 1 one-and-a-half hour English classes per week.

I decided to divide my curriculum into three distinct streams that I eventually called **Analysis**, **Mechanics** and **Writing Practice**. My skeleton plan for Term One looked like this:

First term plan		
Strand	**Content**	**Method/Text**
1. Analysis (deconstruction)	Interpreting ways of seeing Finding core questions Exposing structure/analysis of form Finding patterns	Literature/Short stories Narrative form Cultural/historical use of story telling Oral story telling traditions
2. Mechanics (structure/form)	Sentence structure Paragraphing/sequencing ideas Vocab. extension Punctuation	Writer's workshop Redrafting Examining works in progress Structured grammar and punctuation lessons
3. Writing Practice (reconstruction)	Starting on core questions Reflection: expressing self, values, the human condition Recounting: describing a real event Recreating: imaginative story, creating an end to an existing story	Journal entries Creating personal time lines Past learning experiences Short story writing

Literacy for Self Expression

What I notice now about this plan is that it focused on Literacy for Self Expression but also included elements of Knowledge and Public Debate. By examining 'stories', both personal and those of others, I hoped to develop in the group a sense of individual and group identity. By studying and analysing a range of representative texts (deconstruction) and then writing in a variety of common genres (reconstruction) I wanted students to be able to look within as well as gain a sense of where they fitted in to broader society. By developing Literacy for Self Expression students not only develop 'a strong sense of self and personal identity' but 'a sense of connection with cultural traditions and to others around them' (*CGE for Adults*, p. 135).

At the time of making the plan I wasn't aware that I was intuitively doing this. I remember that my initial reaction to the Curriculum Model and competencies was one of combined interest and suspicion, with the overriding question: 'But how will this affect what I do in the classroom?' It came as a great relief to me to realise that they were a way of describing the kind of work already and commonly taking place within the field and in my classroom.

Once I found a practical application for the Curriculum Model I became more interested to learn its language and to examine the background that had informed the development of the competencies. What I had initially seen as lofty theory immediately lost its alienating and separate quality and I could see a bridge to what I considered to be the more valuable down to earth practice. I find that the 'Background Work—Reading and Writing Curriculum Model' section of the *CGE for Adults* document contains crucial information as it includes an explanation of how the competencies sit in regard to the general body of work (*CGE for Adults*, pp. 127-169).

I think that the skills that my students acquire in class (which could be measured through the Reading & Writing competency modules of the CGE for Adults) are only a part of a broader philosophical agenda that I set myself. Principle Five of the Nine Educational Principles set out in the 'Background Work—Reading and Writing Curriculum Model' suggests that 'the development of competence in various literacies is intimately entwined with, and influenced by, **cognitive, emotional, psychological and social factors**' (*CGE for Adults*, p. 132).

One of the best features of working as an ALBE tutor is working with the prior learning and life experiences of students. These students are not only writers and readers and thinkers; they feel and are spiritual and have a body and a mind and a past and a present and a future, all of which are present in the classroom in combination at any given time. I feel we should not just see that our work is about skills acquisition and the measuring of these skills but is about the development and acknowledgment of the student as a whole person. If we are to maintain the holistic features of ALBE it is important that tutors be prepared to take a broad sweeping, eclectic approach drawing on elements of philosophy, science, psycho-dynamics, sociology to implement the competencies and fully serve the possible curriculum.

Second term planning

With the emphasis in first term being work on the domain of Literacy for Self Expression, I resolved that the content of the second term (eight weeks) should concentrate on the other three domains, with emphasis on Literacy for Knowledge and Public Debate. The competencies we had used most were reading and writing but students had come alive during the sessions that dealt with oral storytelling, tradition and joke telling. I also decided to increase the profile of Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking as competencies and bring them out into the open to the students rather than merely embed them within lessons as before.

Second term plan		
Strand	**Content**	**Method/Text** **Theme: Identity**
1. Analysis (deconstruction)	Interpreting ways of seeing Finding core questions Exposing structure/analysis of form Issues - bias/opinion/point of view Emotive/persuasive language	Media studies—newspapers, TV *Age* vs *Herald/Sun* coverage Articles by Barry Dickens/ Vitali Vitaliev Koori history and contemporary issues How do we define ourselves? How do Kooris define themselves? How does the media contribute to this? * **Resources:** A list of teaching resources can be found at the completion of this article.
2. Mechanics (structure/form)	Argumentative essay writing Exposing generic structure	Writers' workshop Examining works in progress
3. Writing/ Speaking practice (reconstruction)	Commenting on core questions Engaging in public issues/debate Taking positions & determining appropriate ways to take a stance Researching topics and issues so as to develop an informed voice	Contention cards Series of debates/writing on controversial/emotive topics: - Abortion - Smoking - Land rights - TV Active listening activities.

Arguing a point of view

With the 'sting' of my first term mechanics lessons still fresh in my mind I decided to concentrate on the form of argumentative essay writing for the Wednesday sessions. A few students left the course at this time (the rat owner was one of them) and the dynamics of the classroom settled down to preparation for further study. Most of the students had never attempted formal essay writing before, so there was plenty of material to cover here.

Two books that I found were staple resources were *Senior Language* (Sadler, Hayler & Powell, 1981) and *Introduction to Academic Writing* (Oshima & Hogue, 1988).

The first is a senior secondary book containing units on a series of set topics with titles such as 'Language in Action' and 'Thinking and Reasoning'. Some of the material needs adapting for adult students and as there is a plethora of books of this kind I am not suggesting it is a definitive text. It is difficult however to find material that does not patronise our students but is nevertheless accessible. That is why I use this book.

The second book is widely used in the English as a Second Language field but is equally useful for native English speakers. The simple step-by-step exercises on paragraphing and developing an essay were invaluable. I discovered this book in week 16, five weeks into Term Two. My evaluation notes after using this book in class read:

> Use this approach first next time!

Personal and cultural identity

Alongside this essay work ran an Analysis theme of **identity**. Here we explored issues of personal and cultural identity, extending the work of first term to include issues of public debate. We analysed the media's coverage of the Olympic Games, concentrating on exposing nationalistic bias. We extended our work on cultural identity to include Koori history and contemporary issues. We applied many of the critical thinking skills to an examination of language and the way it can be used both to create and to manipulate ideas.

Experimenting with tone

Students were interested to discover the way in which tone contributes to the power of a piece of writing. We began to experiment with adopting voices that distanced us from our subject matter (even when that subject matter was of a highly emotive nature). It was hard to do, but students did develop a critical relationship with their subject matter and began to feel more comfortable about stepping beyond personal opinion and adopting an objective, authoritative voice (*CGE for Adults*, p. 140).

As students began to work with tone, subject matter and language I could begin to see we were now working at Levels 3-4 of VAELLNAF, covered in Elements 3.4, 3.8 and 4.4, 4.8 (*CGE for Adults*, pp. 43, 47, 53, 57).

Week 18: Contention Cards

As part of my push to include oracy tasks I developed another card game called Contention cards.

Contention Cards

Students receive a card with a contentious statement on it. They have 15 mins. to prepare an affirmative or opposing argument. Students present their argument to class, attempting to remain rational and disguising their personal point of view. Topics shift and should be developed according to current issues.

Some of my topics were:

- Australia's future is bleak.
- Women should give up their jobs to unemployed men.
- Smoking should be banned in the workplace.
- Abortion is a woman's choice.
- We should change the Australian flag.

I used this game to reinforce the principle that we should be able to argue points of view that may or may not be congruent with our own. I made up a set of contentions based on subjects that would elicit a variety of emotional responses, from 'Australia's future is bleak' to 'Married women should give up their jobs to unemployed men'. Each card indicated whether the speaker was to take the supporting or opposing viewpoint. Regardless of their personal opinion students had fifteen minutes to prepare a presentation expressing the point of view suggested by the card.

Students worked alone, isolating at least three points that they felt would support their argument. They were encouraged to use language that was persuasive but that would also mask their personal point of view. We set up a speaker's 'soap-box' and each student had to speak for at least two minutes. After the presentation, class members had to try and guess the speaker's own viewpoint and give positive feed back about the content and performance of the speech.

This lesson came at the end of our work on point of view and students responded well to the challenge of the task. We found that the students presenting a viewpoint consistent with their own had a better chance of seeming objective. Students' speeches that attempted to support an opposing viewpoint were either totally lacking in content or tended to swing into overtly persuasive language that seemed insincere. It was one of those high-spirited times when everyone was eager to have their turn—the speaking was strong but what was lacking was some strong listening.

My evaluation notes of that day suggest:

> Work through distinction between talking/listening, to/with/at someone. Explore contention that listening is an active not passive skill.

Active listening

From here I developed a lesson that explored listening as an active competency. This lesson was developed to challenge the assumption by students that listening is passive, not active. I wanted students to explore the textural layers of sound through active listening to natural and environmental sounds as well as to the spoken word.

We went to the Botanic Gardens and sat in a place where we could hear both traffic sounds and sounds from birds and nature. Students were asked to close their eyes and listen to what they could hear (for one minute). They then recorded and discussed their results.

> Response at this stage is general:
> - birds singing
> - traffic noises
> - cars
> - trees rustling.

Students then broke into small groups (two or three) and each group was given a specific thing to listen for: e.g. traffic group, bird sounds group. They closed their eyes and listened to those specific sounds for one minute—to concentrate and isolate those sounds from the others and to listen for detail.

They then recorded what they had heard and spoke in their groups and then to the wider group about the results.

Response alters:

- 2 types of birds, one with small repetitive cheeps
- clanking of truck trays as they go over bumps
- screeching of car brakes.

We talked about sound having texture and noted that isolating our listening allowed us to sensitise ourselves to the detail of that texture. We discussed the process of isolating our listening and questioned what would happen if we listened again for very specific sounds.

e.g. car brakes group
single bird sounds group

How focused can we be? How much detail can we hear? What happens to our language? We talked about language being contextual and how we use it to create meaning. We went on to do a range of other listening tasks involving listening to *each other*. Students then experienced the distinction between passive listening and *active* listening (that is, listening for meaning and clarity)

Final term planning

Part of my English assessment criteria included an oral presentation to the class and a tutor/student-negotiated research project. I decided to use the final term to create two projects that would allow students to demonstrate their level of ability in each of the competencies and their understanding of each of the literacy domains.

I wanted to create an assignment that would combine aspects of both the term's work and give students the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in a form where they were responsible for much of the planning. Expanding on our term two theme, I asked students to think about some aspect of their lives that they felt contributed to their sense of identity.

Presentations to the class

We brainstormed the topic of **identity** and came up with a range of elements that contribute to one's sense of self. This list included family, personal relationships, cultural connections, political and religious beliefs, sports and hobbies and the past. Students had the two-week holiday break to create a proposal for their talk, outlining subject matter and possible approach so that they could comfortably talk 'as an expert' for a minimum of fifteen minutes.

Students returned from the holidays in various stages of preparation for their presentations. I found that the topic of **identity** had connected some students to their past in a negative way and some had inadvertently chosen aspects of their identity that were far too personal, proving to be quite painful, family and past relationships in particular.

We spent a lesson going over the decision-making process, concentrating on aspects of **identity** that had taught us something or contributed to a sense of wellbeing. This new definition allowed students to feel comfortable and safe with their material. The students' choice of topic shaped the way in which they presented their material and therefore which of the oral literacies were to dominate or be recognisable in their presentations.

Here is their list of topics:

Student topics for oral presentation	
Belly dancing	a *discussion* of its place in Turkish women's culture
Native flowers	a *demonstration* of a modern flower arrangement
Elvis Presley	an *examination* of the controversy surrounding his death
Greyhounds	a *personal story* about the breeding, raising and racing of a champion greyhound
Domestic violence	a *personal story* and *analysis* of its causes
Steven King	an *examination* of his writing style and the phenomenon of fear
Kung Fu	the history of, and practical *demonstration* of two different styles
Lawn bowls	an *explanation* of the rules and strategy of the game
Competitive sailing	an *explanation* of boat classes and the physics of sailing

We discussed the need for background research to support the personal views and experience of each student, and the possible ways in which information could be presented.

We spent the first and second week of the new term exploring the structure of Public Speaking. I included the opportunity for students to include presentation aids, so we went through the process of making hand-outs and using video or illustrations as supports. We created structures for remembering information (the most popular one being the series of cue cards).

Listening evaluation

Because I also wanted the project to be about listening effectively I introduced a formal feedback sheet to be filled out by every class member about each talk. Not only were they responsible then for their own presentation but as audience members as well. This level of prospective accountability lifted stress levels to an all-time high, but as the students remaining in the class at that time had all decided on further study it proved to be a worthwhile reality tester. In fact, I used a Victorian Certificate of Education Oracy Common Assessment Task model as a basis for my listening evaluation sheet.

Listening evaluation sheet

ORAL PRESENTATION **Name:** **Topic:** **Purpose:** **Feedback:** What were the good/bad points to this presentation			
AUDIBILITY: Volume, projection, enunciation .../5			
Very Good	Good	Adequate	Inadequate
AUDIENCE: Awareness of make-up, communication with individual or group .../5			
Very successful	Sound	Adequate	Lack of interaction
ORGANISATION: Ordering of material, clarity of presentation, fluency .../5			
Very clear, fluent presentation	Soundly organised & presented	Adequate	Lack of clarity
CONTENT: Ideas and issues; explanations; illustrations .../5			
Clear sense of control; degree of complexity	Sound control & some degree of depth	Adequate but little depth or expansion	Inadequate to meet needs of task
TOTAL SCORE .../20			

The Oral Communication Competencies

It is only recently that I have become familiar with the Oral Communication Competencies, and what interests me the most is the information in the Strands section: subject matter, tone, language, shape and the addition of the listener strand (*CGE for Adults*, p. 180).

I am receptive now to the idea that the Oral Communication Competencies in the *CGE for Adults* describe what is already occurring in the classroom as I saw my students explore each of these elements in their presentations. I observed that the task I had set them was a 'structured monologue' and although the choice of topic was generated by the domain of Self Expression (social episodes), most presentations focused on the presentation of Knowledge, and in some cases students explained a process whilst demonstrating it (Presentation and Support episodes—see *CGE for Adults*, pp. 176-177).

In a few cases students also posed questions to the audience and proposed a range of possible viewpoints, touching on the Exploratory episodes in the domain of public debate (*CGE for Adults*, pp. 176-177). At times students also talked about their own experiences and expressed strong personal opinions (Anecdotal episode). As such, it is important to note again that these varying oracies do not exist in isolation from one another.

On examination of the Oral Communication Competencies (*CGE for Adults*, pp. 60-83), I find it difficult to link an assignment such as this to any specific module or oracy. It would be possible to set up isolated individual speech episodes in order to assess a particular competence, but in general it is crucial to note that the range of Oracies are possibly even more embedded within each other than the Writing and Reading competencies and that the Oracies in general are firmly embedded in the whole literacy process.

Shifts in tone are more acceptable in most speech episodes than they are in writing, and although I feel it is important that the students learn to be flexible and conscious of these shifts in tone, I also think it is important that students do not fall into the trap of devaluing chat and revering formal speech. The best position is to be able to use speech appropriately and to enjoy the challenge of assessing what type of speech episode is occurring and how to deal with it—speaking powerfully for differing purposes.

Tying up the threads: a written project

Following the oral presentations the class was experiencing an all-time high. The talks had been valuable because they tested out the trust that had been building slowly throughout the course; everyone had to speak and listen to everyone else. The presentations were intensely interesting, entertaining, and at times quite moving and the group strengthened its identity through the process.

We were four weeks away from the end of the course with one more tutor/student-negotiated project to complete. After the success of the oracy project we decided as a group to slightly alter the structure in order to create a written project.

Including all four domains

In this case students were presented with the challenge of having to include all domains in their finished assignment. Some chose to create four distinct sections and clearly isolate each domain. Others chose to combine and embed the domains within each other. Following a brief computer training intensive most students chose to word process their assignment. It was generally noted that students were surprised how 'authoritative' their work looked when presented in this format.

I wanted students to explore writing for different purposes but to maintain their role of expert. Because their writing was to have a defined purpose they had to think carefully about **the best way to construct it**. I was gratified to see students analysing their subject matter in a deliberate way and adapting it to suit the set task.

Students were allowed to use the same topic as their oracy task if they wanted or change to something else. Four out of ten students changed their topic. Belly dancing became a look at pandas, flower arranging transformed into the work of Rubens from a feminist perspective! Steven King was replaced by endangered birds of Australia and sailing made way for a diary of a trip to an Aboriginal educational camp. These students felt that their original topics had not had enough potential, especially when it came to including issues of public debate.

Two samples of student work

Following are two examples of students' final work. They differ in subject matter and style, however their most important quality is that the process of the writing allowed each writer to develop a sense of himself or herself as an expert. Earlier in the course both these students had been reticent about expressing their opinion, and their written work had often lacked 'a voice' and clear purpose. In this assignment however their voices are clear and purposeful and they display a complex understanding of their subject matter and the writing process.

Matthew

Matthew returned to study after having worked for several years as a carpet layer. He enrolled in the CAE eight-hour Basic Education course but transferred to the full-time course in 1992. His aim was to improve his skills so he could study VCE. His special interest was music and Matthew spent much of his spare time studying and playing his saxophone.

In the early weeks of the course we identified that Matthew needed to work on his spelling and the clarity of his handwriting as the 'mechanics' tended to detract from the quality of his ideas. He learned to redraft his work and saw some improvement over time. Matthew did not let his spelling affect his experimentation with vocabulary and with the aid of a 'spell check' program on the computer was able to produce sophisticated work. Matthew is now studying Year 11 (including music) at University High.

In November 1992, Matthew travelled to the Dharnya Centre, an Aboriginal education camp, with a group from La Trobe University. During his stay he kept a detailed diary. This record of personal experience and the social issues raised during this visit became the basis for his assignment. The presentation of his work included the creative use of different type-faces to denote the four domains. I include here excerpts from his project in each of the domains.

Aboriginal Education camp at Barmah, Victoria: Matthew

SELF EXPRESSION

Sunday

Driving in a small, noisy, red Honda Civic along the dusty gravel road to our destination we suddenly came to a dead end. The road was totally blocked by flood water. As we pulled to a stop we were greeted by a Koori man called Shane who told us that because of the flooding alternative arrangements had been made. We were then directed to a place called the Belinda Lodge which was about two kilometres from the township of Barmah.

When we reached the Belinda Lodge we were greeted by six boisterous dogs and the owner of the lodge—Lyn Cunningham. It was about three-thirty in the afternoon when we finally turned the car engine off. There were six people that had already arrived at the lodge and were playing pool and relaxing. After unpacking our belongings and choosing a bed, we had a look around our future home.

The lodge was a rectangular shape and resembled a log cabin. Inside, the sleeping quarters were partitioned on either side of the building, with the living and kitchen area in the middle. The place had a nice homely feel about it, with a TV, piano and pool table as the highlighting features. The outer grounds of the property had old rusted machinery lying around not being used. It vaguely reminded me of an old Western movie where the movie starts with the camera panning over old buildings before the 'cowboys' come riding into town.

KNOWLEDGE

One of the projects of the Aboriginal Advancement League was to help in the setting up of the Dharnya Centre in the Barmah forest. The primary function of the centre was to provide cultural education for the community. The funding for the Centre was money allocated to Aborigines by the Commonwealth Employment Funding Program. The Yorta Yorta people were assured that they would have control of the Centre when it was built. It has been six years now since the Centre was finished and nothing has happened. The Yorta Yorta people are still fighting for control of the Centre which uses Aboriginal history and culture to attract tourists.

After a talk was given to the group by Colin Walker, a Yorta Yorta elder, about the conflicts between white man's law and Aboriginal customary law, Matthew chose the following issue:

PRACTICAL PURPOSES

Dharnya Centre, Barmah forest

Location: The Dharnya Centre is located nine kilometres out of the township of Barmah, approximately three hours from Melbourne.

Bookings: The Centre can only be booked for short term hire. Prior bookings must be confirmed within 30 days by payment of a one hundred dollar deposit. Bookings may be made by contacting the Department of Conservation, Forest and Lands on (058) 212 478.

Charges: Twelve dollars per person, per night. People must vacate the premises by 2 pm on day of departure.

What to bring: Bring own sleeping bag (blankets and sheets provided). People can cook their own food or catering can be provided.

PUBLIC DEBATE

"Should Aboriginal customary law be recognised by the Australian legal system?"

An issue that has been widely talked about over the last ten years is Aboriginal customary law. Customary law refers to traditional Aboriginal rules and customs about their way of life. Aboriginal law uses spoken knowledge and tends to be flexible, in contrast to the documentation and rigid nature of Australian law. Since the colonisation of Australia by white settlers, Aboriginal customary law has never been recognised. Yet while customary law has been broken down by settlement and the introduction of alcohol, this basis of law is still used by traditional Aboriginal communities today. I will look at the different arguments for and against recognition of customary law by the Australian legal system which were presented to the Australian Law Reform Commission in 1977 (Crawford, Hennessy & Fisher, 1987).

An initial argument in favour of recognition of customary law is that not recognising it contributes to the perpetual breakdown of traditional Aboriginal structures where customary law is used by traditionally active Aboriginal people. Secondly, not recognising customary law discriminates against Aboriginal people who act on a traditional requirement within their law and yet are punished by Australian law. Thirdly, recognition of customary laws would contribute to upholding law and order within their Aboriginal communities. This is important because the Australian legal system is looked on by Aboriginal people as being incompetent and using a foreign value system.

Debbie

Debbie came to the CAE after completing a Skillshare course. A sole supporting parent of two young children, Debbie wanted to improve her general education and explore the possibility of further study. At first Debbie lacked confidence in her ideas and tended to stay within safe limits. As the course progressed, her enthusiasm and willingness to take risks saw her make significant leaps in skills and confidence. She is currently studying Year 11 at the Council of Adult Education (CAE).

In her final assignment Debbie chose to present an aspect of her identity that was both intimate and painful. She kept with it, however, because she considered that she had learned valuable lessons from the experience that she felt were worth sharing with others. In Debbie's assignment she combined the four domains instead of separating them out. At times there are distinct domains present (which she noted by placing PP, K, PD & SE next to sections of text.) What I appreciate most about this piece is the author exploring tone and language, trying to find a voice so as to present her material most powerfully. I include only the beginning and end of Debbie's text and have identified only one example of each domain for purposes of simplicity.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: DEBBIE

Criminal assault on women in their homes occurs in up to one-third of Australian homes. The abuse women experience consists of severe and prolonged physical, sexual, social, psychological, and financial abuse: all of these things result in almost total destruction of the woman's self esteem. She is usually brainwashed into believing she is inadequate and believing that she is to blame for the violence perpetrated on her.[K]

As I have been in this situation, with two different men, at various times, I can relate to all of these things. One of the first questions asked is 'why do women put up with physical abuse? ' There are many reasons: because of the psychological and physical abuse, the woman isn't mentally strong enough to leave, they have been brainwashed into thinking that they can't survive on their own. They also believe that they are weak, hopeless and useless, and they have a very low self esteem. Another reason is the financial situation, as many women in this situation have children and if they leave their income would drop drastically, so they feel that they would be better off to stay with their husbands, for their children's sake. The reasons I stayed with my son's father (the first man that had abused me) were because I blamed myself, I also had a low self esteem, and because of the financial and housing situation, I felt compelled to remain with my partner. Many women are led to blame themselves for their husbands' violent outbursts.

Why do men abuse their wives or the people that they claim to love? There have been many theories as to why, but as yet nobody has touched all of the causes. Some of these theories are, because when the man was a child he saw his mother being bashed by his father, or maybe he was bashed as a child. However is this a legitimate reason, aren't these men old enough to decide for themselves right from wrong?[PD]

Some men are so possessive of their wives they feel they are going to run off with anyone. With my son's father he was so insecure he wouldn't even let me be around when his friends were at our house, I wasn't allowed to do the shopping on my own, he had to come with me. Even then he thought that I looked at men, and wanted to leave him for them. Violent husbands like to have total control over you and to have the power over you.

. . .

Statistics show just how serious the problem is among the population[1]. 'One study has shown that 42.5 % of all homicides were within families of de-facto relationships. Of these domestic killings almost 55% were spouse killings, of these spouse killings 26.7% of the victims were male and 73.3% of the victims were female. 70% of your male homicide victims had been violent to their wives.' Police are a lot more aware of the problem now. When they get called to a domestic violence situation they have to charge the offender with assault, if they can see that an assault has occurred. They will then issue them with a restraining order, and this means they are not allowed to go near, intimidate or phone the victim at all for the period stated on the order. This is usually until the offender has to appear at court. The victim can then decide whether or not she wants this order to continue. Normally by this time the offender has been so nice to the victim, they don't take the matter any further.[PP]

My husband has been to court over this matter so many times I can't remember. He used to abuse me physically and psychologically before I married him. He stopped bashing me for six months so I decided to marry him. Everything was going fine until the night before I got married.

All of my family came from all over Australia, the pressure got to him so he started to drink and he hit me. My brother saw the incident and nearly killed the mongrel. Because I only had him, and a few friends, since I have known him, he was shocked knowing that I didn't have to rely on him always. This brought out the insecurity and jealousy in him. My marriage only lasted six months. The reason I still married him was for security, and since I realised after getting married nothing changed, I started to realise I could do better myself and for my two children.

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Many people believe that women ask for the abuse, because they nag or provoke it. Nagging shouldn't have to end in violence, and how can a woman who is usually smaller than her husband provoke such a violent attitude. Besides, no-one should have the right to inflict violence on any-one, unless it is used in self-defence. People should have the right to feel safe and the right to answer to themselves and to nobody else, as long as they aren't hurting anyone.

I have learned a lot in my relationships, I am still learning, I have started to like myself, I can survive on my own, and I don't have to blame myself.SE

Through doing this assignment, I have realised that what has happened to me has happened to lots of other women, and there is a way out!

Note 1. A. Wallace, *Homicide: The Social Reality*, N.S.W. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 1986.

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Domestic Violence in Australia, Nicholas Seddon, Federation Press, Leichhardt, NSW, 1989

Structured adventure

I appreciated the stability that the competence statements brought to my planning but I also feel that they encouraged me to be more adventurous in testing out my own ideas within that overall structure. The realisation that the language and distinctions now available as the 'Background Work—Reading and Writing Curriculum Model' could be used directly with students, and that this in turn would increase their sense of power and control over their reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking was a definite milestone.

In my current teaching I'm using some of the material generated in the 1992 course and repeating many of the lessons with the new group. I've retained my deconstruction, mechanics and reconstruction strands when formulating broad plans and refer now to the *Certificates of General Education for Adults* to cross-check specific competencies. Creating curriculum and classroom resources using the competencies has proved to be challenging yet rewarding, and as long as students refrain from bringing animals into the classroom I think I'll be around for a while.

Acknowledgments: Thanks to Mary Pyle, my co-worker, for her partnership and to the students who provided their work for publication. Special thanks to Delia Bradshaw for the clarity of her ideas, her vision, generosity and intelligent feedback.

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Teaching resources

ABEL Cable—Adult Basic Education & Literacy Tutors' Newsletter 1992 no. 3, Return to Study Dept, Council of Adult Education

Deadly, 1990. Esben Storm & Richard Moir. Beyond Films/Moirstorm Productions, Australia. Videocassette, 102 mins.

Koori Keeping Place, State Museum of Victoria.

Lousy Little Sixpence 1983. Alec Morgan & Gerry Bostock. Ronin Films, Australia. Videocassette, 54 mins.

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If only I had time . . .

Curriculum Planning

Barbara Lorey
Robiny Stricker
Hugh Kiernan

The curriculum models which follow are intended to provide some options for teachers of full-time literacy and basic education courses at Levels 1 and 2 as described in the Certificates of General Education for Adults within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework.

The longer document from which these curriculum models derive, ***If I only had time . . .****, is not prescriptive*[1]*. It is acknowledged that the needs of students in these courses are likely to vary enormously and may best be met using a flexible approach, negotiating the superstructure and infrastructure of the curriculum as it evolves.*

The source document, entitled ***If I Only Had Time . . .****, came out of a project funded through the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council of Adult Community and Further Education and was conducted in three stages:*

Stage 1: discussions with tutors to identify good practice in full-time programs

Stage 2: writing curriculum guidelines

Stage 3: conducting workshops in the use of them.

The material included here from this project focuses on the changing nature of literacy courses, developing full-time literacy courses and creating a curriculum using the four literacies, in particular at Levels 1 and 2.

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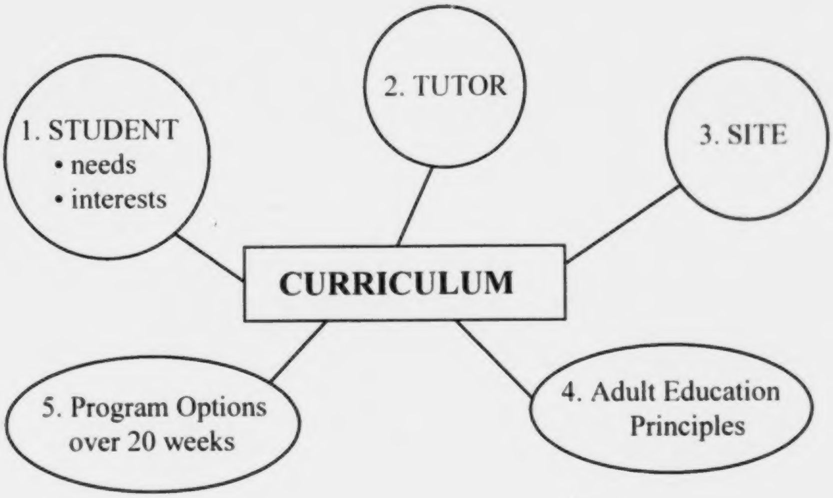
[1] For information on this project and for the complete version of *If I Only Had Time . . .*, please refer to the office of the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council of Adult, Community and Further Education.

Creating a curriculum


1. STUDENT
• needs
• interests
2. TUTOR
3. SITE
CURRICULUM
4. Adult Education Principles
5. Program Options over 20 weeks

Curriculum design for full-time programs requires a co-ordinated approach as we are no longer considering stand-alone 2 hour blocks of time per week. The increased number of teaching hours in the week allows a program which moves in different directions incorporating many different types of activities.

In order to create your own curriculum each of the five elements above is crucial in influencing your teaching style, and in turn influencing your students' learning.

The requirements of the VAELLNAF do not dramatically alter the face of our teaching. In fact, if anything they reassure us that we have been on track with the work we have been doing with students so far. They do, however, prompt us to be more creative and diverse in our planning.

In particular, the separation of the Reading, Writing and Oral Communication competencies into the four domains broadens what can be covered in a curriculum because facets of each need explicit teaching; competence in all four domains won't necessarily just happen on its own.

When planning curriculum, the rationale for choosing the skills to be covered is predominantly based on the competencies; however, the rationale for choosing topics or themes comes from the tutor's knowledge, interest areas or expertise in an area, as well as from students' expressed needs and desires.

Although curriculum is negotiated between tutor and students, there needs to be a starting point and it is the tutor who must be prepared to initiate the learning procedures and content.

In the first section of this Unit we describe five options showing how a full-time program might look in a variety of circumstances. In the second section of this Unit we present examples of how units of study may be planned by teachers and students. Some units of work might be planned for one session or by one tutor in particular; others might be planned by all tutors for all sessions over a period of weeks. In the third section we discuss ways in which competency statements may be analysed and assessment tasks devised.

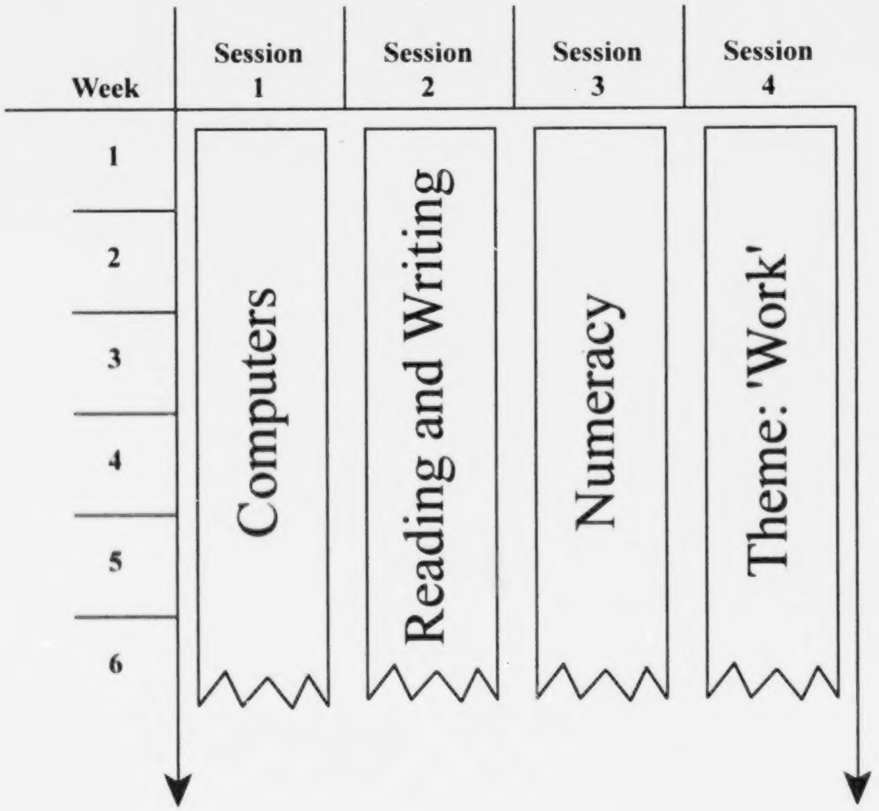
Program options

Option 1: all tutors work on the same theme or unit

Week	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
1	Introduction			
2	Health			
3	Health			
4	Holidays			
5	Road Rules, Cars			
6	Newspapers			

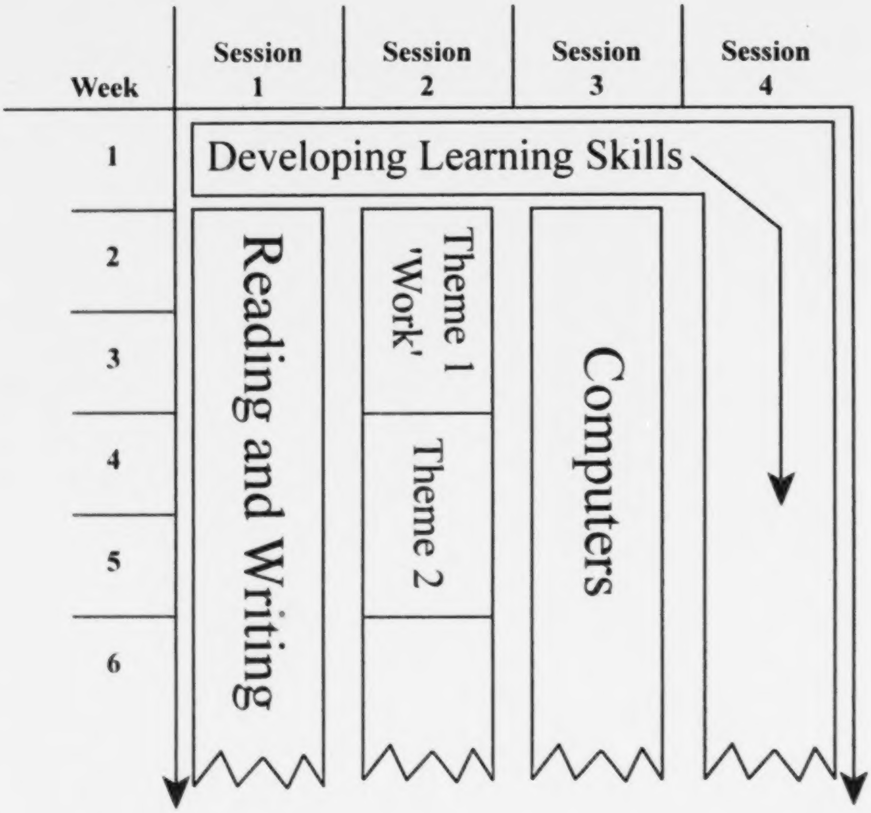
Option 1
In this model all tutors work with the same theme or unit, and there is a clear break between themes or units. Note that in this model, literacy skills are taught in the context of each unit; there is no separate session devoted to them. There is a need in this model for close interaction and planning between tutors.

Option 2: each tutor teaches a different subject


Week
Session 1
Session 2
Session 3
Session 4
1
2
3
4
5
6
Computers
Reading and Writing
Numeracy
Theme: 'Work'

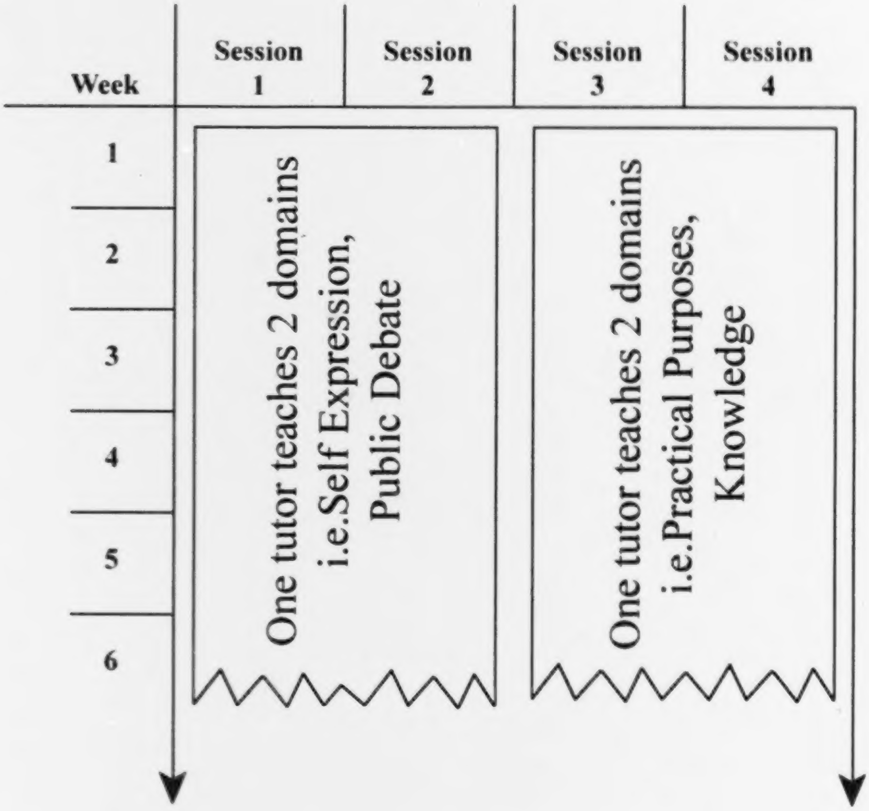
Option 2
In this model each subject is taught separately. There may be partial interaction between tutors; less than in Option 1.

Option 3: Based on the development of themes


Week
Session 1
Session 2
Session 3
Session 4
1
2
3
4
5
6
Developing Learning Skills
Reading and Writing
Theme 1 'Work'
Theme 2
Computers

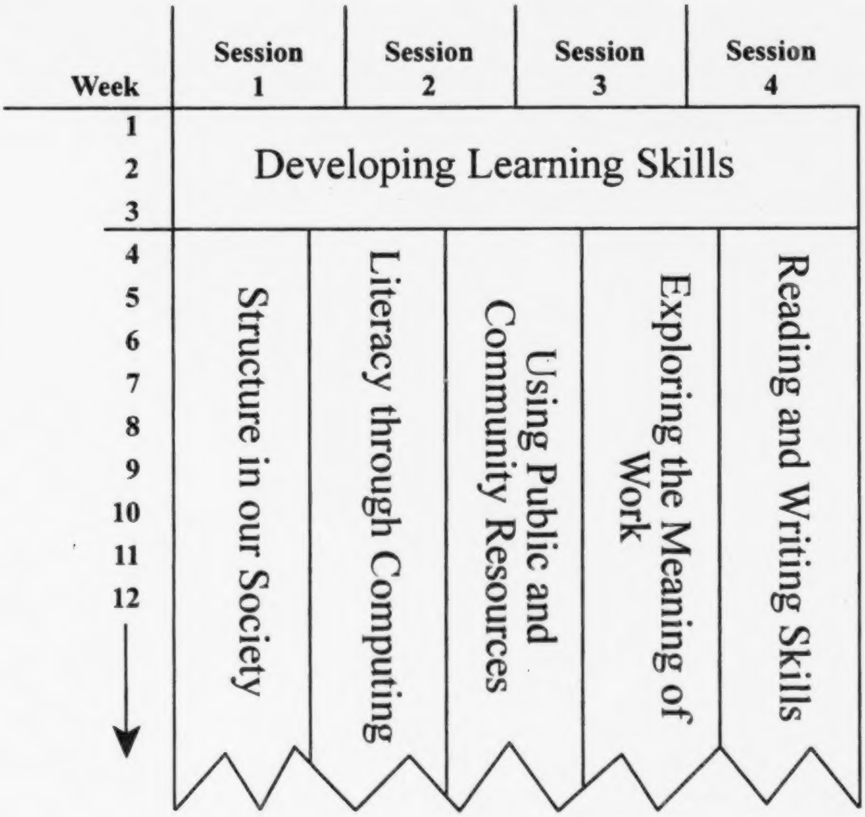
Option 3
This model allows for the development of themes, some of which last several weeks and others which last longer.

Option 4: each tutor teaches two domains each


Week
Session 1
Session 2
Session 3
Session 4
1
2
3
4
5
6
One tutor teaches 2 domains i.e.Self Expression, Public Debate
One tutor teaches 2 domains i.e.Practical Purposes, Knowledge

Option 4
This model features a clear break between domains, with each tutor taking responsibility for explicitly teaching two domains.

Option 5: Separate subjects


Week
Session 1
Session 2
Session 3
Session 4
1
2
3
Developing Learning Skills
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
Structure in our Society
Literacy through Computing
Using Public and Community Resources
Exploring the Meaning of Work
Reading and Writing Skills

Option 5
This model is shown in detail on the following pages. It is a suggested curriculum only, containing maths integrated into some subjects and a wide range of activities in the four domains.

Developing learning skills

Weeks

1

2

3

Orientation to

- learning centre
- childminding
- people and their roles
- resources
- 'phones
- parking
- timetables
- enrolment
- procedures
- meeting the group

Learning in Groups

- adult learning
- individual rights & responsibilities
- cooperating with others
- group interactions
- working in pairs & small groups
- having a say, group processes
- values clarification

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

↓

STRUCTURES IN OUR SOCIETY

The Family
'My family'
Family Life of another ethnic group
What is family? Different definitions and models.
Family dynamics. Power, control, decision-making.
My role in the family.

Rights and responsibilities: in society, at home, in class
Assertiveness, conflict management, negotiation, time management, stress management

- **Equal opportunity**

What is it? Who is disadvantaged in our society? The law. Moral rights.

- **Choice**

What are my options?
What's stopping me?

Participation in the learning centre
Electing a representative
Attending meetings
Meeting procedures

The Australian political system
Three levels of government:
LOCAL - responsibilities, sources of funding, how it functions.
STATE - two houses, the party system, responsibilities, your local member.
COMMONWEALTH - two houses, responsibilities, your local member, electoral system, leaders.

Having a voice
Accessing your local member.
'Reading the news'.*
Accessing the media

- talk back radio, letters to the editor
- evaluation of media output

Other political models
Dictatorships
Communism
Fascism
Anarchism
Tribal groups
'Utopia'

LITERACY THROUGH COMPUTING

Skills Development:

- acquisition of a technical vocabulary relevant to contemporary society
- the ability to give and receive instructions
- the ability to follow verbal instructions
- the ability to follow written instructions
- ability to recognise common computer prompts and responses
- ability to select from a menu bar
- familiarisation with a standard keyboard
- ability to touch type
- introduction to basic computer concepts and terminology
- naming the parts of a computer
- developing good work practices specific to computers
- ability to access a word processing program
- ability to edit and save a document
- ability to retrieve and edit a document
- ability to print a document
- using a Spell-check

Particular advantages of wordprocessing in developing literacy skills:

- easy editing of essays, stories and letters
- achieving a professional-looking document results in pride in work
- monotony of re-writing is avoided
- focus is diverted from the student onto the machine (a particular advantage for students who have lost confidence in their ability to write due to repeated failure)
- a new and different approach
- repeated exposure to clearly written characters (good for recognition of alphabetical characters; upper and lower case)
- copy typing encourages correct use of punctuation
- common punctuation conventions become habitual.

* Topic expanded into lesson plans in complete document, ***If Only I had Time . . .***

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Developing learning skills

Coping with change
- stress management
- time management

Using Resources:
- library visit
- other resources, e.g. community

Organisational skills:
- organising notes & folders
- organising personal life
- organising time to study

Individual learning:
- memory
- whole brain theory *
- motivation
- goal setting

USING PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Utilities:
GAS AND FUEL CORPORATION
Customer Services. How to read the bill. Emergency calls. New connections and disconnections Comparing costs with electricity.
SEC
As above.
MELBOURNE WATER
As above. Leisure services. Sewerage system. Historical perspective. Demographic changes, future planning.
TRANSPORT
Timetables. Fares. Making connections. Maps - Melways, etc. Concessions and tickets.
TELECOM
Using the directories. STD and ISD. Extra services, e.g. for hearing impaired.

Leisure
The concept of leisure. What is it? How does it change when you are employed? Community venues. Exploring individual talents and interests, e.g. art, craft, music, sport, games, cinema, theatre.

Educational resources
Universities. TAFE. Schools. CAE. Community Houses. Libraries, Private tutoring.
Demystifying the educational system
The hierarchy of education. Access for adults. Mature age entry. Looking at large institutions. e.g. TAFE.

Government Departments
See 'phone book. State and Federal gov't departments. Information access. Complaints. Requests. Use.
HEALTH
Hospital. Medical. Dental. Alternative medicine. Community health centres. Women's Health centres. Health issues, e.g. inoculations, AIDS, Transplants, abortion. As above.
JUDICIARY
Police, commonwealth, state. The legal system. Legal aid. Freedom of information.
OTHER SERVICES
Post office, range of services. Banks - interest rates, loans, deposits and withdrawals, cheques, automatic tellers.
EMERGENCY SERVICES
Use. How to contact

EXPLORING THE MEANING OF WORK

Historical perspectives, e.g. ref. McCormack, *The World of Work.*
Pre-industrial
Industrial revolution
Technology

Definition of 'work'
Models of people 'working'. How work has changed. What we use as labels for who we are, e.g. engineer, teacher, labourer, housewife.
"Exploring the meaning of work" - expending energy.*
Notion of paid and unpaid work. Women's work, ref. *Women and Work.*

Work options
Skills inventory, analysis, checklist. Personal attributes. Looking at career options, using JAC, etc. Resumes, Job applications

The workplace
Workplace cultures, case studies based on experiences of students. Health and safety, Workcare. Equal opportunity. Hierarchies and power. Industrial models, e.g. TQC (Total quality control), Industrial democracy

Unionism
History. Role. How they work, notion of group power. Changing role. Legal aspects. Awards - gathering info from Department of Labour, what is covered?

Budgeting
Costs involved with working. Managing on a budget; some guidelines, i.e. rent 1/4 of income. Saving - tricks and strategies. Cheap buys - where do I go? Survey prices of a range of shops and markets.

READING AND WRITING SKILLS

Use a thematic approach to explore the four domains.
For example:
- Multicultural Australia. Explore the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of class members through their family histories. Students orally share what they know. Students interview older members of family for facts and anecdotes. Students explore the process of finding evidence through the registrar's office. Class visits a cemetery to consider facts available from headstone (check everyone is happy with this idea first). Personal writing and factual writing resulting from above activities.
- Explore the range of nationalities and ethnic backgrounds (including Koories) which make up Australian society.
- View videos on multiculturalism. Read *My Place* by Sally Morgan (abridged version available). Read personal accounts of immigration to Australia. Write about someone from a background different to one's own. Consider an aspect of a culture, e.g. religion, food, marriage ceremonies and explore the similarities and differences using pictures and texts.

OR

Use literature to teach different genres, e.g. *My Grandmother* by Barry Dickins (ageing), or *My Place* by Sally Morgan (Koori issues).
Writing from *My Grandmother.* Recipe for Anzacs. Own biscuit recipe. Other recipes. Personal writing about starting your first job. A description of your grandmother. A train trip you have taken. Christmas cards, songs, etc. Aged hostels & homes.
Resources:
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* Topic expanded into lesson plans in complete document, ***If Only I had Time . . .***

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Recognition of features of each domain

Tutors need to be aware of the grammatical and visual details of each domain in order to teach specific features. Below is an initial list of features which can be added to as tutors identify details. This then becomes a reference list for students and tutors.

TEXT TYPES			
PRACTICAL PURPOSES	**KNOWLEDGE**	**SELF EXPRESSION**	**PUBLIC DEBATE**
instructions	non-fiction	stories	articles by newspaper columnists
manuals	encyclopedias	poetry	letters to the editor
forms, directions	textbooks	autobiographies	policy documents
signs, notices	information sheets	letters, diaries	publicity material
handbooks		journals	pressure group material
business letters		novels, plays	arguments
street maps		myths, legends	expositions
labels, memos, conversations		greeting cards	discussions
		narratives	
		recounts	
instructions	explanations	anecdotes	
procedures	information reports	moral tales	

TEXT FEATURES			
PRACTICAL PURPOSES	**KNOWLEDGE**	**SELF EXPRESSION**	**PUBLIC DEBATE**
Step by step	Few adjectives	First person	Evidence
Command verbs: *put, turn* etc. (Imperative)	Factual base	Colloquial language	Opinion
Sequential	Organized into paragraphs	Humour	Reasons
Method & ingredients	Linked paragraphs	Relaxed style	Cause & effect
Layout very clear	No opinion or emotion	Like talking	Often mentions research to strengthen argument
Pictures, diagrams	Seeks to be logical	Gentle, intimate style	Mentions statistics etc. to strengthen argument
Bare minimum language	Not seeking to 'engage' the reader	Highlights feelings, emotions	Emotive: *should, must*
Procedures	Stated verifiable facts	Internal	States position, argues then sums up
Point form	Mainly present tense	Informal punctuation	Authoritative tone
Simple lists		Contractions e.g. *don't, can't*	Refers to experts
Action verbs		Not necessarily factual	On the other hand, contrary
Maths concepts		To entertain	Lots of assumptions
Impersonal		To tell a story	Punchy
Usually title and/or sub-headings		To connect with reader	Clever argument
Instructional		Mainly past tenses	

Taken from an Eastern Metropolitan Region Curriculum Workshop at Montrose Community Centre

Planning Units of Study

Structured brainstorm: pre-planning a Unit

Tutors and/or students, preferably in groups, generate ideas about a topic and place ideas in appropriate categories. It becomes immediately evident where 'gaps' exist, or where there are natural emphases depending on the topic.

It is likely far too many ideas will be generated to be accommodated in the theme/topic (depending on length), so tutors will need to analyse the material in the grid to then organise it into an appropriate weekly or daily format that uses a variety of methods and domains.

By using a series of arrows it is possible to indicate many different pathways through the available material, moving between domains and tasks.

Any domain is a good starting point and any other domain can follow. An issue, for example logging operations, may begin with the Public Debate domain, move to the Knowledge area to gather facts, then through to Self Expression and back to Public Debate. The writing in the latter part of the unit should then display greater control of argument and evidence than earlier attempts.

See unit on 'Antarctica' for an example of a structured brainstorm.

Tracking an evolving unit

Tutors are aware that a great deal of classroom activity is spontaneous and takes new directions. The grid therefore provides the opportunity also to document quickly the process of a number of lessons by filling in the grids.

For example, in a unit on 'Cars and Car Maintenance' that evolved and developed rather than being planned from the outset, various activities were allocated grid references (see page 48 for brief unit notes).

It became clear where there were gaps to be filled, and further directions that could be taken.

This unit basically evolved from student suggestion and participation as the twelve men and two women were keen to learn and/or share skills regarding cars.

It is then clear from the grid that various domains were treated and that many avenues were still possible.

What is also clear is that areas not strongly treated in this unit can be addressed in units which will follow. At the end of a number of units students have experienced all domains.

Topic/Theme construction: Structured brainstorm

The grid below can be used to construct a unit/ theme. This grid uses the four domains of reading, writing and oracy and includes numeracy.

	PRACTICAL PURPOSES	KNOWLEDGE	SELF EXPRESSION	PUBLIC DEBATE
READING				
WRITING				
ORACY				
NUMERACY				
SPEAKERS EXCURSIONS AUDIO-VISUAL ETC.				

Antarctica

Structured brainstorm: pre-planning a unit

	PURPOSES	KNOWLEDGE	SELF EXPRESSION	PUBLIC DEBATE
READING	Maps Geographical details Time zones Travel times Signs, eg Danger, Toxic etc.	Scientific info. eg ice, glaciers Scientific research in Antarctica Fauna, flora - Walrus - Penguins etc Historical info., early exploration Research skills	Journals of - Scott - Mawson Related topic James Scott's Himalayan experience (1991) of cold, isolation, fear etc. [ANALYSIS OF A COMPETENCY LEVEL 2 SELF EXPRESSION READING]	Mining in Antarctica Ownership Tourism in Antarctica Ozone Environment
WRITING	Geog. details Compass Giving directions How to pack for Antarctic expedition Survival in the snow (link to survival in bushfire ie extreme conditions)	Produce project-type material icebergs hypothermia isolation plants in extreme conditions (biology) ice: nature of	Own experience of: Extreme conditions, hot or cold Personal reactions Poems Isolation (also in new country) Loneliness Beauty of natural phenomena Fear of nature, eg storms	Short articles to newspaper Write 2 points of view with limited evidence Election issue
ORACY	Spoken how to_ to small group	Presentation to small group	Retell story Tell own story	Debate Learn debating techniques
VISUAL	Survival in snow etc. How-to films (Nature of)	Documentaries	Feature movies	Issues Debates
SPEAKERS, EXCURSIONS, ETC.				

Water*

	KNOWLEDGE	PUBLIC DEBATE	SELF EXPRESSION	PRACTICAL PURPOSE
READING	Maribyrnong sewer collapse Sewer system Science–water cycle/treatment	Article from the *Age* re Western subs kids living in sewer User pays? Franklin	Water sports–fishing, boating Tim Winton's stories	Reading bills Maps
WRITING	Letters of complaint Cloze activity from pamphlets Speed copying passages Letters re homeless kids	Re water quality	Poetry Describe what it felt like swimming as a child Go to dam–describe experience of standing below wall	How to purify water How to change washer How to conserve water
ORACY	Employment/Careers	Water quality Debate re billing system, or conservation methods Fluoride		Enquiries re excursion
VISUAL	Maps Flow charts Design own pamphlets		Photos of beach, river, holidays etc.	Maps
EXCURSIONS	Parks/Reservoirs Lillydale Lake Bush			
VISITORS	Rangers First Aid Speaker (Drowning)			
MATHS	Shower rose Drip watering Dual toilet system Pie graphs			Accounts Measuring rainfall
RESOURCES			Novels	

* This unit was constructed from a variety of pamphlets produced by Melbourne Water. The group worked solely from the pamphlets, in which writing was very accessible, to brainstorm an enormous number of possibilities.

Personal Survival

Pre-Level 1/Entry Level 1*

	KNOWLEDGE	PUBLIC DEBATE	SELF EXPRESSION	PRACTICAL PURPOSE
READING	Environmental issues CFA Pamphlets–'What's Wrong in this Picture' activity sheets	Safety precautions, ie woollen blankets vs acrylic blankets	Emotions–pictorial How do you feel? What is happening? What would you do? etc.	Survival words, ie - fire escape - danger - hazard
WRITING	List of emergency directions	List of things you do things you don't do	Scary experience - write a sentence - words that describe fire or how you feel about fire cloze exercise	Draw a plan of the bedroom/house–label exit & meeting points. List order
ORACY	Tape of directions		Give important information–What would I do if? Catch-phrases, ie *stop, drop, roll* etc.	Emergency phone numbers
VISUAL	Video–survival, ie stop, drop, roll Photos			
EXCURSIONS	Visit to CFA Community venues — look at emergency exits		Movie–eg *Towering Inferno, Backdraft*	Visit to Country Fire Authority (CFA)
VISITORS				How to use fire hydrant, equipment from fire officers
ACTIONS	Emergency Drill			Role play Emergency Drill

* This theme was developed at the tutors' workshop specifically for Pre-Level 1/Entry Level 1 students but could be adapted for use with Level 2 students or above, depending on difficulty of material presented.

Cars & Car Maintenance

Tracking an evolving unit

	PRACTICAL PURPOSE	KNOWLEDGE	SELF EXPRESSION	PUBLIC DEBATE
READING	Melways work	Articles from *Royalauto* on - Insurance - Car colours Transport systems		'Petrol will have to go' (readings about fuels and resulting debate) M
WRITING	Writing directions Writing instructions Changing a tyre and basic car maintenance How to get to my place M		Car trouble	'Without doubt the best car is_'
ORACY	Teaching other groups basic car maintenance		Car stories	
VISUAL				
SPEAKERS, EXCURSIONS ETC.	Trip planned to Fisherman's Bend (if possible)			

M = Maths: Maths activities can be included in the general planning, or be given a new category within the grid. Here it was decided to treat Maths issues as they evolved within the unit.

Analysing competency statements & devising assessment tasks

For general classwork, students need to be encouraged to read a wide variety of materials at a variety of levels. With adequate preparation, prediction and discussion most students can deal well with reading that is beyond Level 2. It is important not to restrict, but to broaden the horizons of the students.

However, for the purposes of assessment, where teachers need to have a clear indication of the real 'level' of students, that is, for exit statements or for mid-term statements etc, it is important to choose an appropriate piece of reading material or an appropriate writing task which will allow the student to demonstrate his/her abilities.

The example following attempts to clarify one competency statement namely the Reading Competency for Level 2, Self-Expression. The competency statement is reprinted with accompanying notes indicating possible teaching areas that may be covered.

On the opposite page, Performance Criteria questions are suggested that would indicate student abilities. This type of exercise can be repeated with other competencies so that the familiar teacher-type questions and activities will slot into place with the language of the competencies.

It is worth analysing the focus of Level 2 competencies, which appears to be understanding and using 'the paragraph', its structure, types and usage. A great many skills are practised at Level 2, but the realisation that the paragraph is the basis on which Level 2 is built is an important one. It enables teachers to use confidently all the skills and activities that are within their normal repertoire and still meet the demands of competency statements.

The competencies are therefore able to clarify the abilities of students without limiting the nature or scope of the overall curriculum. That curriculum will have a very individual nature depending mainly on the stated needs or interests of students, the personality and ability of the individual tutor and the facilities available in any program.

Level 2—another view

The competencies contain language and a format which may be unfamiliar to many tutors. For this reason an analysis has been made of the common elements across the four domains for the Level 2 reading and writing competencies. It has become apparent through this process that Level 2 concentrates on the nature of a paragraph. Teachers will easily recognise familiar teaching points as they peruse this page, but merely teaching students to write a paragraph is not enough for them to become competent at this level. It is, in fact, the diversity of reading and writing possibilities and the richness of language (both of which teachers already use), which makes a person competent.

Analysing a competency statement

2. Descriptive details
   - adjectives or
   - adverbs
   - words that make writing more interesting e.g. use of senses

1. Main idea and flow
   - Topic sentences
   - sequence words: then, etc.

3. Link with prior knowledge
   - personal experience
   - stories from novels, newspapers, TV, radio

Element 2.5:
Reading for Self Expression
Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a simple, less familiar narrative or literary text

Performance Criteria:
1. Identify the main point and the general flow of the story or piece
2. Locate key descriptive details
3. Link content to prior knowledge or experiences, with similar stories or literary texts
4. Express an opinion on particular characters or the story as a whole.

Range/Conditions:
1. Use of dictionary of choice
2. A narrative or literary text at this level:
   a. will present mostly familiar characters, settings or events in mostly everyday language
   b. will have more than one clearly indicated voice or perspective
   c. may contain related illustrations
   d. will use a variety of sentences linked by conjunctions of time to create a simple chronological sequence
   e. will have the structure of a story at least a paragraph long.

4. Opinion:
   - Language for preference, like and dislike
   - Language assertive, i.e. not aggressive
   - Use of reasons
   - Evidence for opinion from text

2a. Less familiar
   - not necessary personal experience
   - known from TV, radio, newspapers
   - ideas from the past

2b. More than one voice or perspective
   - dialogue
   - use of punctuation to indicate voice
   - change in mood or ideas of speaker, protagonist.

2c. Visual literacy:
   - meaning of illustration
   - bias etc. of illustration
   - details in illustration

2d. Sequencing
   - Time
   - conjunctions
   - recognition
   - Sentence types
   - Varied sentence structure

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Devising assessment tasks

Performance Criteria

1. What words would you use to describe James' state of mind in paragraph one?
   or
   Pick one of these to best describe James in Paragraph 1.
   He felt:
   (a) like giving up
   (b) uncomfortable
   (c) he would be OK in 3 or 4 days etc.

> When I looked down the valley, I saw ominous black snow clouds moving towards me. I struggled back to my rock. My feet were sore, my mouth was ulcerated. I was desperately cold and suddenly hungry. I had been vomiting for three hours. I had had enough. I decided to stop eating snow so that dehydration would kill min in three or four days.
>
> I took no more ice or water that night or the next two days. On the third night I dreamed about the engagement party planned for my return. All my friends and family were there - and Gaye, looking really beautiful. I made a speech and talked about my parents and Gaye and how we would always stick together. When I woke I realised that I couldn't give up.
>
> from "MIRACLE IN THE HIMALAYAS" by James Scott & Eric Bailey taken from "READERS DIGEST" Feb, 1993 Vol. 142 No. 850 page 37
> condensed from: "THE DAILY TELEGRAPH WEEKEND" (Feb 22nd,, 1992 & Mar 7th, 1992) copyright 1992 by The Telegraph PLC/James Scott London

(2) Choose words that describe the clouds
or
Choose words that describe how James felt

(3) Have you or some-one you know, ever had this type of experience? Describe a similar experience.

(4) What type of person do you think James is? What words help you make up your mind?

Range and Conditions

2b. Students can be encouraged to identify voice or perspective with the following types of questions

James' attitude changes in this extract. Where? Why?

2d. Students can identify time conjunctions by such activities as:
Underline the words that tell us how many days passed in this extract.

PLEASE NOTE: These assessment tasks may be written or oral activities

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How paragraphs work: Level 2

Students concentrate on:

mostly familiar	
• characters, settings, events	**in mostly**
• procedures	**everyday**
• topics	**language**
• social or personal debate topics	

Students need to be able to discuss, detect (read) and use (write):
Specific types of words

- formal and informal
- opinion words– to show fervour
- persuasive devices
- time sequence devices (*then, later, . . .*) and chronology
- emotive words–exclamations
- descriptive words–adjectives, adverbs
- pronouns precisely used
- cause and effect conjunctions (*because, . . .*)
- use of some technical words

Students need to discuss, detect (read) and use (write):
Specific types of sentences

- imperative constructions
- persuasive constructions
- neutral tone of researchers
- various sentence structures

Students need to discuss, detect (read) and use (write):
Specific types of paragraphs

- Persuasive (PD)
- Objective (Kn) classification and explanation
- Time sequenced (SE)
- (PP) Time sequences and imperative
- Generalisation and specific examples
- Main point and key descriptive details
- Ideas and evidence
- Various voices, times, places, perspectives.

Students need to discuss, detect (read) and use (write about) the importance of:

- graphics (and graphs?)
- illustrations
- new visual input and how it relates to texts

Students need to develop:

- scanning skills/skimming
- linking to prior knowledge
- comprehension of words from context clues
- detection of overt opinion
- detection of message 'conveyed' by text
- knowledge of what further information is needed or what is missing
- the ability to rate pieces, giving reasons
- expression of opinions.

Homework

Now analyse for yourself the common features and focus of Levels 1, 3 and 4. In so doing you will demystify the competencies and become aware of your ability to both teach and assess, using the competencies as a tool.

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Critical literacy

Developing an Australian history curriculum

Pat Forward

Early Australian history is a story of many easily identifiable struggles, struggles between convicts and authorities, squatters and free selectors, gold miners and authorities, soldiers and settlers, women and men, and of course, Europeans and Aborigines. Around a focus of key events since white settlement, and against a background recognition that there was history ***before*** *white settlement, Australian history provides rich resources for reading, writing and discussions that develop fuller understandings of contemporary Australia.*

This article describes the essentials of a history text written by Pat Forward for a class of retrenchees from the Textile, Clothing and Footwear and Passenger Motor Vehicle industries. It provides some representative extracts from this Australian history text, and then describes in more detail the discussions and issues raised within one specific unit of work on the topic of bushrangers. After documenting what the students themselves said about studying Australian history, the article begins the process of mapping a curriculum such as this one onto the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework.

The students and negotiating a suitable course

The students were all part of a TCF/PMV (Textile, Clothing, Footwear/Passenger Motor Vehicle) DIEA (Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs) retrenchees program. They were people who did not fit the selection criteria of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program offered in the Language Studies department of the Northern Metropolitan College of TAFE.

Backgrounds and language skills

I started with a group of eleven students which grew to thirteen. There were nine women and four men. The youngest in the group were two men under forty. All were immigrants: one from Turkey, one from Lebanon, one from Macedonia, one from Cyprus, one from Spain. The rest were Greek (three women) or Italian (six men and women). In terms of gender, the group was mixed. Some of the women felt they would never work again because they were too old. They distinguished themselves from the younger men, who were seen to be worse off because of their age, because they were men and because they had relatively young children.

All students had a relatively high level of oracy and fair reading skills. Their writing ranged from 0+ to 1 on the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR) scale—approximately Level 1 developing in Reading and Writing on the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF). Half had completed a few years of primary school in their own countries. Some had been to primary school for one or two years in Australia. One woman had never been to school, and said very early in the class that her mother was delighted she was at last getting the opportunity to go to school.

Negotiating the curriculum

From the start, I was to have the class for seventeen hours a week. Initially I was interested in choosing something like Greek or Roman history as a starting point because of the nationalities of the students, and because I knew some of them had been educated in their own countries. I was also interested because of the potential that ancient history offered to discuss politics and the origins of politics, especially the idea of democracy.

But, although the students liked the idea of studying history, they were even more keen to study Australian history. They argued that they were Australians, that its history fascinated them, and that they knew very little about Australian history. They also wanted a better understanding of contemporary Australian society.

The importance of narrative

I thought it was important to work with a 'story' that would allow us to investigate different aspects of contemporary society. Using an unfolding narrative was also helpful in structuring the overall curriculum because it provided continuity and familiarity from week to week. It also allowed me to develop more abstract themes, ideas and issues.

Do it yourself textbooks

Because there was very little available, I decided to write a history text myself. I wanted a text that would:

- serve a number of purposes
- provide a continuous and predictable narrative structure from week to week
- give me some control over the content
- contain a clearly defined 'introduction, body and conclusion' structure for students to identify
- make explicit the points of view of different participants
- although 'well presented', be something students could write on and physically use, thus demystifying the written text and establishing the importance of student work.

History as narrative

Australian history, as I use it, is a discourse consisting of a number of different stories or points of view, which do not necessarily confirm each other. However, the points of view are woven into a narrative which acts as a centre or a focus for the study. The narrative forms a firm thread around which to weave the various positions. I think this is critical because it acts as a base when students have to analyse the various positions within the narrative.

Text structure

Positions can be analysed in different ways. At first, a position can be analysed in a highly structured way. The text structure itself provides a basis for investigating a point of view. A good example of this is the structure of a descriptive paragraph. A descriptive paragraph can easily be shown to describe a particular thing, whether it is a person, an industry or a way of life. But it can also describe a position. Dissecting the structure of a paragraph also allows the description of a person's ideas or beliefs.

There is a relationship between the structured approach I have used in the curriculum and the discourse of Australian history I have used as a vehicle for the various interests that go to make up that history. In other words, I have used genre as a vehicle, rather than as an end in itself.

Genre

In a sense, however, the genre approach has provided the second constant thread through the curriculum. The examination of introductions and conclusions, and the paragraphs that go between are a regular feature of the work. The students have a predictable work routine and they know how to work with the text each week. They use the text at a variety of different ways. Those who are working at a more basic level can work more on writing sentences in the comprehension section. However, everyone is exposed to the discussion and debate, and by and large, they all participate in and contribute to these discussions.

The curriculum

The following curriculum is based on an assumption that in order to write, even at the most basic level, students need a place to stand—a position. Of course, there are issues associated with the basic construction of text which cannot be overlooked. If a student does not know the alphabet, then no amount of discussion of positions will help. But my curriculum is based on the assumption that students can acquire these skills in a number of different ways. In particular, it is based on the assumption that they can learn these basic skills at the same time as they deconstruct text in a larger sense. As well, especially if texts are read aloud, students can be initiated into discourses which give purpose to their writing.

The Australian History curriculum I have developed is based on the hypothesis that students need **a position from which to write**. It is also based on the notion that position can be constructed from the discourses to which they are exposed. Students can take a position within this discourse, but they can eventually take a position which is outside the discourse and thus judge the various struggles within a particular discourse. They can do this if they are given the tools to express the positions.

This curriculum provides students with an ideal place to develop a critical awareness of issues fundamental to Australian history, and indeed, to history itself. For example, the students, although from ethnically diverse backgrounds themselves, were completely unaware of the treatment of Australian Aborigines. They, like many younger Australians, were aware that Aborigines had suddenly begun 'to exist' only a few years earlier. The idea that a group in society could be hidden for so long so easily was interesting to them.

The students empathised with Aboriginal people. The significance of this is that Aboriginal history and the early struggles between Aborigines and white settlers forced a construction of two positions, both of which students had an affinity with. On the one hand, the idea of an adventurous spirit, or the desperation of poverty—in other words, the narratives behind immigration—were things with which students felt an affinity. On the other hand, the position of Aboriginal people, forcibly and violently displaced, was also a position with which students could readily identify.

Australian History also allows discussion of contemporary issues in an historical setting. This is important on a number of different levels. Apart from the fact that issues such as Mabo and the Republic are continuing stories in Australian history, and are better understood if their history is known, these issues are often tricky to discuss in a contemporary setting. For example, if students can separate the issue of Mabo from the issue of the threat to their own backyards, then a much richer understanding of the debate can be achieved.

The topics

I have written a curriculum of 22 parts from first settlement of white people to Federation. I am in the process of writing a second section from Federation to the present time. The titles are:

1. Discovery
2. Convicts
3. Early Life
4. Conflict (a)
   Conflict (b)
   Conflict (c)
5. Explorers
6. Blue Mountains
7. Macquarie
8. After Macquarie
9. Society Grows
10. Squatters
11. Squatters' Lives
12. Discovery of Melbourne
13. Gold Fever
14. Goldfield Life
15. Eureka Stockade
16. Effects of Gold
17. Bushrangers
18. Unlocking the Land
19. Free Selections
20. Great Cities
21. Primary Industries
22. Trade Unions

Section A

Each self-contained topic is composed of a 2–3 page text and provides work for one week (approx. 4 hours). This forms Section A.

Convicts

Great Britain settled Australia because they needed somewhere to put their **convicts**. Convicts were people who had **committed** crimes in Great Britain. Often these **crimes** were only petty. Convicts were sent to Australia for stealing. Sometimes they were convicted murderers. Often they were people who did not agree with the government, like the Irish. Some people saw Australia as a big jail.[1]

Many soldiers also had to be sent to the **colony** to guard the convicts. The distance between Australia and Britain was great. The convicts therefore often brought their families. Soon, a small society developed under the control of Captain Arthur Phillip.[2]

The earliest settlements were built close to the coast near rivers. These positions were best for the settlers, who still had most of their food brought from Britain. The settlements depended on the boats to bring them supplies.[3]

The settlement at Sydney grew quickly. The town needed teachers to teach the children, and farmers to grow the **crops**. Houses had to be constructed to house the soldiers and settlers. Blacksmiths were needed to shoe the horses, carpenters and bricklayers to build public buildings. [4]

Outside Sydney, in the west, lay the Blue Mountains. They were a barrier over which the first settlers could not travel. However, it was not long before the first explorers were trying to cross the Blue Mountains. [5]

Tasmania

A small convict settlement was established on Tasmania. Tasmania was an island. The British government saw it as the most secure place to keep the worst convicts. The murderers and political convicts were sent to Tasmania. They had to build their own stone jails. They had to grow their own food. Tasmania was a cold and lonely island. Even if the convicts escaped, there was nowhere for them to go. Many convicts died in Tasmania. [6]

Section B

Section B is a comprehension section where I ask one question from each of the numbered (average 13) paragraphs in the text.

Comprehension questions are structured to help get more information from the text and to help you construct sentences. Answer the following questions in full sentences. Remember that you will usually be able to get the first half of the answer from the question and the second half from the appropriate paragraph in the text.

1. Why did Great Britain first settle Australia?
2. Who controlled the first colony?
3. Why were the earliest settlements settled close to the coast?
4. Why did the settlements grow so quickly?
5. What were the Blue Mountains?
6. Why did the British government see Tasmania as the most secure place to keep convicts ?

Section C

Section C is a dictionary exercise based on five words from the text. Students look up the words and write the meanings in a space provided. They then write a sentence of their own, using the word.

Look up the following words in the dictionary and write down the meaning. Check to see how the word is used in the text before you look it up in the dictionary. This will help you to get the correct meaning. After you have looked up the meaning, use the word in a sentence of your own.

convict crimes crops colony commit

Section D

Section D is usually a cloze paragraph reflecting back on the week's texts, commenting from a different perspective on the events described.

Fill in the gaps with the words in brackets:

Many of the first settlers were .... But they had not always committed .... crimes. Australia was often used by Great Britain as a .... to house those people who did not .... with the government. That is why so many of the convicts were .... At the time of the first .... of Australia, the British government was almost at .... with Ireland.

[war, prison, convicts, settlement, agree, Irish, serious]

Section E

Sometimes I have an additional Section E which looks at the larger structure of the text, and selects a paragraph from the text, explaining how it is structured, and how it fits into the text.

Look at the structure of the following paragraph: I have highlighted the subjects, or main ideas in the paragraph. Notice how this paragraph is more complex than the earlier paragraph. It talks about both the convicts and Tasmania.

A small convict settlement was established on Tasmania. **Tasmania** was an island. The British government saw it as the most secure place to keep the worst convicts. The murderers and political convicts were sent to **Tasmania**. **The convicts** had to build their own stone jails. **They** had to grow their own food. **Tasmania** was a cold and lonely island. Even if **the convicts** escaped, there was nowhere for them to go. **Many convicts** died in Tasmania.

Related activities

History is a catalyst for other activities. We read historical novels as a class. We went on several excursions: to Ballarat, Warrandyte, the Botanical Gardens, and on a boat trip up the Yarra.

Early in the course, I showed a video called *Babakiueria* (barbeque area) because it played with the idea of 'point of view' in a challenging way. The video dealt with more contemporary issues, but its opening scene, of a landing in reverse, was a powerful image. Later, again out of historical sequence, I

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showed the students a contemporary documentary which challenged the idea that the Aboriginal people have been wiped out in Tasmania. I showed this because the text we had dealt with discussed the way in which the Tasmanian Aborigines had resisted white settlement. Again, the video highlighted the fact that contemporary Europeans on Flinders Island had a different point of view from the Aborigines who were attempting to establish their history and heritage. By contrast, the very first video I showed was an old Hollywood movie called *Botany Bay*.

The history of a history course

The most significant theme in the early weeks was the clash between Aborigines and white settlers. I did not do a separate session on Aboriginal culture for a number of reasons. The most significant reason was that I wanted to hang on to the interest generated by starting with Captain Cook, which all the students expected to do. As well, I was conscious of not doing justice to this aspect of Australian history in a short period of time. However, I thought it was important from the beginning that Aborigines' place in the history of their country be recognised, particularly by people who had themselves had dismal experiences of immigration.

Reading aloud

Initially, I tried to write the text at an appropriate level for the students. I soon discovered that I did not need to, and that I could be more adventurous. I always read the text to the students. I read it before we did any work on it, and I read it at the beginning of work on it each day. Sometimes, during the comprehension questions, I read through it again. By the end of the week, students were very familiar with the content of the text.

Modelling text structure

Often, however, I write it in a way which allows me to talk about the larger structure of the text. For example, I try to make sure I have a good introduction and a good conclusion. I also try to write good descriptive paragraphs, and I use them in the text to show how paragraphs are written. This attention to the textual features of writing is also present in the Performance Criteria of the *CGE for Adults*.

Recurring themes

The story of European settlement in Australia can be seen at a number of different points in terms of recurring themes. It provides excellent opportunities for laying the foundation for discussion of contemporary issues in Australian society. For example, the recurring issue of the treatment of Aborigines by the early settlers allows discussion of the meeting of two very different cultures, and the impact of one on the other. It also allows the issue of the way in which much of the history of Aboriginal people was hidden until the last twenty years to be discussed. It inevitably leads to discussion of the White Australia Policy, and Australia's selection and treatment of migrant people. It is impossible, in this context, not to acknowledge that the people for whom this course has been developed are themselves subject to an economic and political system which has dealt poorly with them. The point is that at one level or another, these people are aware of this, and of the irony in this.

The Bushrangers lesson

We started all lessons in a similar way, reading through the text and discussing issues as they arose. The Bushrangers lesson was one which we were all looking forward to, as everyone had read or had seen films or videos about bushrangers. We had seen the movie *Captain Starlight* which hadn't been particularly riveting, but which everyone had found entertaining.

The Bushrangers lesson covered a number of different issues which I raised in the text as we read it.

- Australia had been developing a class and social structure which paralleled British society in some respects, but was different in others. In some senses the story of the bushrangers can be read in this light. As inequities developed in society, it was easy to see that the challenges to power and authority in society represented by the bushrangers was something which those in authority bitterly resented.
- Religion, and the differences between Roman Catholics and Protestants, had been a developing theme in society since the First Fleet when a disproportionate number of Roman Catholics arrived in Australia in shackles. Similarly, a disproportionate number held positions of authority in the hierarchy which the Catholic Kellys challenged. The story of the bushranger demands an understanding of the role played by religion in Australian society.
- The Irish situation, in the context of the Catholic situation, provided a context in which to discuss the Kellys, especially if one accepts the argument that Kelly was a republican, and represented the early stirrings of republican sentiment.
- The issue of people who challenge illegitimate power in society—the Robin Hoods and the Ned Kellys—representing something which the students readily identified with, the context of their own countries' history. Whilst the previous themes I have outlined above could each have been built into the lesson and predicted, the issue of 'Ned Kelly' type characters was a surprise. Whilst we were discussing Ned Kelly, some of the students started to converse with each other, one group in Greek and another in Italian, explaining the story of bandits in their own country's history. They then told us about the bandits. It was this that led into the next issue covered, the issue of justice.
- The Ned Kelly story raises the question of what is a criminal? When is crime all right? The Kellys did not really give their ill-gotten gains to the poor, but then again, they had little in the way of ill-gotten gains. They did kill policemen. I was interested in what approach the students would have to the character.

This lesson provided a good example of the interaction between discussion and the text. It is a particularly good example of the different ways in which debate can develop.

The origins of crime

The text describes the history of bushranging, the early 'bolters' and the lives of the bushrangers. I deliberately tried not to romanticise the story, but there was a great deal of murmuring when it came to the class origin of the bushrangers and their Irish backgrounds. The students interrupted soon after I started reading. They debated among themselves whether these bushrangers were 'criminals', or whether they had been forced into their life of crime.

Despite a certain amount of feeling that petty crime should not be encouraged, it was overwhelmingly felt that the English had persecuted the Irish so much and harassed the Kelly brothers so persistently that they could hardly be blamed.

Transfer of learning

One student expanded on this by reminding the class that many of the early convicts had been Irish, and that they were like 'political prisoners'. We had discussed this early in the course. The students were conscious of the connection between the injustice of the punishment, and the response of the bushrangers. This was interesting because it was something they had 'learnt' in a previous lessons, and now they realised that they really had 'learnt it'. They were pleased because they had been concerned at how little they remembered from class, but this established that they could learn and remember things.

The Irish

This led to more discussion about the Irish situation, because some students, particularly the Italian students, had little sympathy for the English, and were interested in the way in which the English have 'handled' the Irish situation over the years. They questioned the English attitude towards the Irish, and the assumption of superiority which they allege British people have. This led to the question of religion.

Division between Roman Catholic and Protestant

We had previously spent a couple of classes discussing the Reformation, and the split which had occurred between the Roman Catholics and Protestants in Europe. It is really only in this context, in the context of the very deep historical division between the religions that any sense of the hostility between them is gained. Given the divisions between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Australian society, this emerges and re-emerges constantly throughout the course.

During this lesson, the students raised the issue of the Reformation. Again, we talked about religious persecution, and the burning of heretics during the Middle Ages. On the one hand, students expressed surprise that religious intolerance could reach this level; on the other, they said that they knew that this sort of thing happened. They asked whether the way in which the Kellys were treated was religious persecution.

Religious intolerance

Although the issue of 'class' had not arisen in any great detail in our history lessons up until this point, students understand the basic structure of society in these terms. So, the connection between religious intolerance and class position was a relatively simple one to explain. We talked about the way in which Anglicans, even during this early period, had assumed positions of power and influence in society, while Roman Catholics, but particularly Roman Catholic Irish people, had been marginalised. So students readily understood that the Kelly family were seen to be 'troublemakers', and 'lower-class'. They also understood that the police could therefore easily target the family, and particularly the boys in the family, and that this would lead to a spiral of involvement with the police.

The question of whether or not harassment by police contributed to or even justified the murder of the four constables was one which students grappled with at length. They certainly believed that the actions of the police led to the Kellys' killing the constables, but getting them to examine their attitude to the murders was fascinating. On many levels, they believed the murders were justified.

Folk heroes

They recognised, however, that there was a certain inconsistency in their position. Initially I interpreted their reluctance to argue for their positions (i.e. their support of the Kellys) as a fairly straightforward belief that in killing the police the Kellys had gone 'too far'. However, this was not the case. Many felt quite strongly that the Kellys were justified, and as the lesson went on, they were prepared to substantiate this by talking about the similarity between Ned Kelly and local folk heroes from their own country.

Catholics in Australia

The Kellys were identified as Catholics, and were treated unjustly by society. The issue of the treatment of Catholics in Australian society is not one with which the students were familiar before studying this course. But they are always fascinated when it is raised, I think because the notion that sections of society have previously been discriminated against as a group, and for well-defined reasons, is intriguing. They identify with this in terms of their own experience, especially those who arrived in Australia during the fifties and sixties. They make use of the permission that they feel this gives them to discuss their own situations, not so much in personal, but in political terms. I think it intrigues them that this form of overt discrimination occurred.

Student reflections on the course

The students in this class have developed a great liking of history, and Australian history in particular. They are intrigued by the multifaceted nature of Australian history—the way in which the protagonists do not always 'shape up' on the 'same side'. They talk about the history in a number of different ways. I was not surprised that several of them said they had spent nearly thirty years in Australia, but had not known anything about the country's history in all that time. They insisted that many things which had previously made little sense to them in contemporary society, now had meaning.

History and politics

In particular, politics and the political system made more sense in the context of knowledge about early European settlement. On many different occasions, we discussed the impact of the British system of justice and parliamentary democracy on a country many thousands of miles away. In particular, the debate over a republic seems to demand some sort of understanding of Australian history. The students themselves commented on this fact.

Concern for other histories

At different times the students expressed amazement about how little study of history seems to go on in schools 'these days', and how important they think history is for all people in society. By this I mean, the students have always been interested in history, and appear to think that modern society neglects history. They love Australian history, but equally, especially as the course has gone on, have suggested they would like to study another history as well. They are all immersed in the history of their own countries, regardless of when or at what age they arrived in Australia. They believe that the history of any country, not just the country from which they come, or the country in which they now reside, is important.

I believe this enthusiasm for history is twofold. On the one hand, students identify history with a sense of cultural heritage, a 'feel' for history as tradition. On the other, they articulate a version of 'learning from history to avoid repeating mistakes'.

Filling in the blanks

In this context, however, students were keen to articulate why they liked the course. The most common comment was that it 'filled in the blanks' in their knowledge of contemporary Australian society. They were conscious of the notion that what Australian society now was arose out of the history of white settlement.

A few students wanted to draw other 'lessons' or other meanings from the history. One woman argued that the hard life of the early settlers and convicts had touched her profoundly and made her grateful for what she now had. She also said she had not previously been aware of the treatment of Aborigines, and that her ideas had changed as a result.

Writing, analysis and truth

One of the most interesting comments came from a woman who did not really know the alphabet when she started in December. She said that she understood society and history for the first time. She said that having the text written in front of her, and being able to read it gave her a much deeper understanding than her TV viewing had done. She said that what she now dealt with on the page was the truth because it was written down. When I asked her what she meant, she said that if it was written down, it could be measured against other written texts, and confirmed or denied. She said that she understood that there were different positions, but that if you were dealing with writing, or words, you could confirm or deny it.

Bringing it back home

The final comment is from one of the older men. He said that the history course had helped him to put his own situation into a broader context. He took up the argument about 'being grateful for our present situation' put forward by one of the women. He said that while he agreed with that broadly, he also thought Australian history had some very 'dark patches', and that many groups in society suffered because of white settlement. When pressed, he said that he did not just mean Aborigines, he meant migrants as well, and gestured towards all the students in the class.

The History curriculum and VAELLNAF

The four literacy domains

The 'Australian History, 1789–1900' curriculum has been written and developed to encourage reading, writing and oral communication in the form of discussion and debate. In particular, inasmuch as it is possible to separate the literacy domains, it focuses strongly on three of the four domains in both Reading and Writing, and Oral Communication. Of course the learning outcomes of a curriculum organised in terms of content cannot be mapped in any simple one-to-one way onto VAELLNAF and the Certificates of General Education (CGE) for Adults.

For example, it is not obvious whether a student's participation in a debate should count as demonstrating competence in, say, the Knowledge domain, or in the Public Debate domain or even the Self Expression domain. And even more tricky is the question of which Stream this student's contribution should count within. Is their contribution a demonstration of their Reading competence, their Oral Communication competence or their General Curriculum competence, or all of these? And finally, there is the question of selecting the level within each of the domains within each of the streams at which to assess this contribution.

However, it is not just that the act of dialogue can demonstrate competencies from different domains, streams, and levels. Acts of writing possess a similar ambiguity and multifunctionality. For example, student answers to an exercise can show their Reading competence, their Writing competence or their General Curriculum competence. These answers can also demonstrate their ability to follow instructions (Practical Purposes), understand the content (Knowledge), take up a position (Public Debate) and express themselves (Self Expression).

Despite these issues—which can be solved by looking at the activities of individual students—I have begun the process of mapping the activities within my history course using VAELLNAF and the *CGE for Adults*.

The most obvious domain covered by the History curriculum is Knowledge; I myself believe the domain of Public Debate predominates. I have written texts for each unit in a number of different ways to emphasise a particular domain. Sometimes the text is written to list dates and events in an unproblematic way to provide background to particular events or issues. However, the point of writing a critical history, and focusing on critical literacy is that knowledge is rarely presented as truth, but rather as *positions* which may be informed by particular ideologies. This means that even when presenting texts for the 'knowledge' domain, the texts will overlap into other domains as soon as students begin to grapple with them.

Students are also involved in other reading and writing activities within these two domains. Apart from the text I have written, we use Don Watson's *The Story of Australia* (1990) as a secondary source, and we also use other history texts—*Their Ghosts May Be Heard* (Coupe, 1984)—which students read to themselves. Sometimes, if I find a suitable chapter, I use it. In addition, it is not unusual to find useful articles in the newspaper about contemporary issues—Mabo and the Republic, for example.

Student writing skills

Students write within the Knowledge and Public Debate domains in a number of different contexts. They are often required to describe a position, a point of view, or the causes of an event (Writing for Knowledge, Levels 2–3). They need to be able to separate 'fact' from 'opinion', even where this itself is questionable (Reading for Public Debate, Levels 2–3). They are often required to deal with cause and effect, for example, living conditions and quality of life, or the differences between free selectors and squatters in terms of the relative wealth and support these groups had (Reading for Knowledge, Levels 2–3). When we look at the formation of the separate States, and eventually look at Federation, they have to be able to separate a society into areas—the economy, the social and the political. Even though these divisions are blurred, the capacity to analyse is enriched if these areas can first be recognised as separate entities (Reading for Knowledge, Levels 2–3).

The advantage of working and thinking within the 'domain' categories is that it forces analysis of practice. It is possible to use the vantage point of the present to examine history, but also the vantage point of history to examine the present. In a sense, therefore, it is the Public Debate domain which dominates, even though it may appear that the Knowledge domain does. This is not accidental, because it feeds the need that students have to experience the connection between learning and knowledge. It has also overcome the problem I experienced early in the course when some women students claimed that they did not want to discuss or know about politics. They did, however, love history.

Self expression

However, history also provides a catalyst for writing and reading for Self Expression. We have used primary source material to look first hand at people's experience of life at the time (Reading for Self Expression, Levels 2–3). These descriptive and sometimes argumentative pieces are appealing to students. In addition, we have used Henry Lawson and A.B. Paterson to look at the development of a particularly Australian literature. Writing in this domain has been prompted by excursions to various places of historic interest like Ballarat and Daylesford. Students both described their own experiences of these excursions (Writing for Self Expression, Levels 2–3), and were able to situate them in an historical context (Writing for Knowledge, Levels 2–3). Excursions such as this, especially to Sovereign Hill, also stimulated interest (if that is possible) in procedural texts—directions for miners on equipment use and when down a mine (Writing for Practical Purposes, Levels 2–3).

The future

I am currently teaching a history of the 20th Century, called *From Federation to Republic* at both Levels 1–2 and Levels 3–4. I use the same materials, but assign different writing tasks. I have also found a way of developing Writing and Reading for Self Expression by looking at primary source material from World War 1 and the Depression, and encouraging students to write pieces in the same style by imagining what it would have been like to live during those time.

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Literacy as legal action

Developing a legal studies curriculum

Julie McQueen

In this article Julie McQueen describes how she worked with Rob Phillips from the Northcote Community Legal Service to develop ***Legal Action: A Resource for Adult Literacy and Basic Education Teachers****.*

She describes how a content and knowledge focused legal education curriculum for adult literacy and basic education learners was developed through planning to meet local community needs. This curriculum not only encourages a socially critical approach to understanding and using the law but provides a stimulating context for the development of reading, writing and oral communication skills that is appropriate for use with the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF) and the Certificates of General Education for Adults.

Reading and writing for knowledge

I was working in the Northcote Library Adult Literacy and Basic Education Program and trying to include some depth as well as breadth in the pathways we were offering. One way of adding depth to the program was by providing 'knowledge' areas—the notion of reading and writing to learn rather than just learning to read and write.

I had already started this process with the Book Club. This class allowed students to increase their hours of study while minimising the possibly negative impact of a series of short literacy classes all with different tutors and often different approaches. The Book Club had also created the sense of status attached to 'real' education programs and courses like the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), rather than the stigma that adults, both of English-speaking background (ESB) and non-English speaking background (NESB), often felt when learning to read and write in English. Expanding the students' knowledge base through the content and issues in the books under discussion had been a very effective way of providing a framework for the development of students' literacy skills.

A local need identified

The need to develop more knowledge or content areas for reading and writing for learning had become urgent when we began offering twenty hours per week literacy/numeracy programs. These programs required detail, clarity and consistency in curriculum planning—and on a large scale. We also had to meet the challenge of providing intellectual stimulation and interest in blocks far larger than our usual programs of two, four or six hours.

The development of the resource package and curricula for *Legal Action: A Resource for Adult Literacy and Basic Education Teachers* (Northcote Community Legal Service, 1993) came about really as a result of being in the right place at the right time. Next door, Rob Phillips of the Northcote Community Legal Service was frustrated in his attempts to provide information to the local NESB community. The difficulty that confronted him was that most people, ESB and NESB, only want to know about the law when there is a problem—not before.

Legal Studies

Rob's suggestion that we work together on some legal information material came at just the right moment. Students often talked about experiences with legal matters or asked for information related broadly to legal concerns, so legal studies literacy seemed a viable option. When Rob first explained his idea I looked at the material available in the Library and found that traditional legal studies resources generally presented abstract material in expository texts heavily loaded with legal jargon. They rarely provided strategies for readers to use the information and apply it to their own situations. Although there were some adult literacy booklets that had a legal studies or legal issues focus, they were presented as Readers on hard-to-look-at shiny paper and needed to be linked in some way.

To decide which areas of the law to cover, Rob drew up a list based on our knowledge of the local community, including the types of inquiries made to the legal service and some demographic profiles of the Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) program students. I checked the validity of this list by asking students in nine of the ALBE classes which areas reflected their own experience in legal matters and which areas of the law they would find useful to know more about.

The next stage of the work was largely contributed by Rob. From his past legal experience he wrote a series of 'real', short and not too complicated hypotheticals for each area of the law. After these were drafted and adapted, we worked together to write them in plain English to avoid unnecessary legal jargon. I learned a lot about the law from these discussions and from trying to find words that had the same meaning as the specific meanings of some 'legal' words. Rob wrote 'The Law Says' sections to provide an outline of the law as a starting place for answering some of the questions the hypotheticals had raised. As well, Rob provided lists of agencies and resource materials for each area we covered.

In preparing the material we had to be clear about when plain everyday language was appropriate and when more formal, standard styles were appropriate. It was at this stage that I first applied the Language and Literacy domains of the Victorian Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF). The hypotheticals were written within the domain of Literacy as Self Expression, the sections called 'The Law' were within the domains of Literacy as Knowledge and in some cases Literacy as Procedure or for Practical Purposes.

Preventative legal care

Rob's philosophy in developing these materials was one of 'preventative legal care', an idea I had never heard expressed before. For Rob, preventative legal care was 'learning about your rights in order to avoid legal confrontation or, at the very least in order to balance up the power relationships when dealing with the legal processes'. This was not so different to my own notion of what learning, including literacy learning, was about. 'Balancing up power relationships' fitted well with my own idea of socially critical education. In my theory, learning requires doing, thinking and critical reflection. This reflection necessarily involves debate and is followed by action that would impact on and change the power relationships the learner might encounter. We were both talking about learning for social change.

Changing the system or changing places within the system

In terms of the law, we both believe that we should be active in the system rather than passive victims of the system. However, I constantly battle with the anxiety that we might, in giving students a more informed entry into the system, ensure them a (new) place with increased power within that system, a place which allows them to make or treat others as victims of the system. We might in fact be perpetuating a system that is based on unequal power relationships. Rob argues that the power to change the system will only come after the power relationships within the system are evened up.

Rights are only a reality when the power exists to enforce them. We both believe that having access to information is of little value on its own, you need the skills and confidence to use that knowledge to enforce those rights.

Trialling the resource materials

Rob and I trialled some of the completed resources with a class of non-English speaking background men and women, long-term residents with mixed language backgrounds and incomplete primary education in their first, second or other languages.

We decided to team-teach the course. We both thought this was necessary because neither had experience in the other's area of expertise. I felt very unconfident about the law and very anxious that students might expect me to be an expert. Rob was to be a very necessary resource.

Each week, early in the week, Rob and I would meet for an hour or so to plan the class. He would run me through the law and we would talk about issues that might be picked up. Together we would consider practical strategies to learn/teach about the law and I would suggest literacy strategies that would be appropriate. I learnt a lot about the law that way. It seemed that for every example we picked I had an opinion to express or it fitted my experience, or a friend's experience. We used this time to test which legal language had to be maintained and which was unnecessary and could be replaced with plain English.

At the end of the trial I felt much more confident about using the *Legal Action* materials (Phillips & McQueen, 1993) on my own. Team-teaching with Rob was a pleasure and a luxury. While it was much more interesting with Rob in the class, I realised that it was easy to let students know that I was not a legal expert and that I was not giving legal advice. I realised too that I had covered much of the same or similar content in a number of literacy classes without calling it 'the law' and had felt reasonably comfortable. In those classes, when I didn't know the answer I would suggest ways we could find the answer. Since the first trial I have had to teach the classes without Rob's help and I have still enjoyed it.

Levels and types of groups

So far I have used *Legal Action* with NESB and ESB groups working at Levels 1 and 2, with ESB/NESB mixed groups working at Level 3 and developing Level 4 of the CGE for Adults, with some Certificate of Occupational Studies students and some students studying various vocational Certificates.

With some groups, legal studies literacy was the focus and I used several areas of the law. The areas of the law to be studied were decided by identifying student's interests, experiences and needs and matching them with the *Legal Action* material.

Sometimes the package didn't cover the legal issues we wanted to look at and we used other resources. Finding other resources worked best after we had used the *Legal Action* package first, because it modelled strategies for finding information, resource people and agencies and strategies for dealing with the information when we found it.

With other groups, 'the law' came in incidentally as specific themes or issues were raised in class and I was able to select one or two hypotheticals and teaching/learning strategies to develop the issue. I was able to do this because the materials were not designed as a course of study or a sequential syllabus.

I found I was able to use the same hypotheticals and 'the law' sections for students working at any level of the Accreditation Framework. It was the students' goals and literacy needs that changed the teaching and learning strategies used for each different level or group.

The curriculum

Developing the curriculum around these resource materials was an ongoing process. The curriculum really didn't begin to take shape until the third session in the trial program and still couldn't be called a curriculum at the end of the trial process. The trial was too short to do more than test some of the resource material and I realised my thoughts about the curriculum were all over the place.

As I continued to work with the material with Rob, and later on my own, I was able to clarify many of the assumptions I make and the principles I work with when developing curriculum.

Principles

Principles underpinning the curriculum included:

- Teaching and learning methodologies are determined by the students' needs and goals (that is, the future contexts in which students hoped to use this knowledge and skill) and the learning context. The strategies used varied in detail according to the students' language and literacy needs, their level of confidence, their learning styles, sometimes their ethnicity, gender and age and the amount of time we had together.
- Real language and literacy skills develop around real situations. The content and supporting materials have developed out of students' experiences and the 'real' language situations they have faced.
- Learning is based on a notion of critical pedagogy, where teachers and learners question, evaluate and reflect on their experiences. Critical pedagogy also requires action after reflection. With this material, critical pedagogy is applied to the learners' experiences of the law and in the area of language and literacy. In this case learners are required to take action in terms of their relationship with 'the law' as well as in their understanding of their development of language and literacy skills and knowledge.
- Negotiation fosters a productive learning environment. In negotiating the content and the teaching-learning strategies to be used, we were required to be clear about our reasons for using particular strategies. Strategies were designed to achieve literacy and language goals and/or legal knowledge and usage goals and were negotiated with, and clearly explained to, students in those terms. This process also helped us to reflect and act on our own teaching.
- Learning is cumulative but not necessarily sequential. It is likely that, as students have a range of competency levels in language and literacy, they may also have a range of knowledge of the law. Each area of the law, while linking with the others, does not necessarily require knowledge of the others. The areas of the law need not be taught sequentially as presented in the collection.
- Curriculum planning requires a curriculum framework. The collection and subsequent curricula were based on a conceptual framework and this was used as the organiser for developing the curriculum. Our conceptual framework was based on the law and the six sub-concepts that are essential elements of the law.

- The Accreditation Framework was used to inform the language and literacy skills to be included in the curriculum.
- Learning includes the growth of skills and knowledge. The material enabled students to develop their knowledge about the law and the community in which they operate. This growth in knowledge fosters growth in the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening and encouraged critical thinking.

The sessions I am going to describe show how I used the resource material from the *Legal Action* package.

Day Class: sample sessions

Class profile

Long-term resident speakers of first languages other than English. All with incomplete or completed primary schooling and between 15 and 32 years in the manufacturing workforce in Australia. All recently retrenched and eager to return to work.

Literacy assessment

All exit Level 1 reading. Using the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF), students' reading ranged from beginning to confident Level 2, with most students described as 'developing'. Students' writing was described as beginning Level 1 to developing Level 2, with most students considered 'developing' Level 1.

Program

Students had completed a twenty hour per week literacy program, 19 hours class time and one hour study/practice time. All subjects were taught using literacy methodologies and included Literacy, Numeracy, Community Access, Australian Studies, Computers for Literacy and Workforce issues. They were enrolled in Legal Studies Literacy as one subject in a part-time program of up to eight hours a week for fourth term. All students were hoping to use part-time study to maintain their skills until starting full-time study again in the new year.

Session 1

For this series of lessons I used some of the 'Householders and the Law' section of *Legal Action*.

I can't remember the reason we started work on Concetta and Mario and I didn't write the reason in my class notebook/diary. I do remember though that it became one of the most stimulating series of classes I had with the group. We started the session 'cold' without the usual establishing of the (legal) context activities first.

I introduced the session by asking about the state of various students' gardens—always something that started this group talking—and handed out a

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copy of the story 'Concetta and Mario'. (This story is one of the hypotheticals for 'Householders and the Law'.) I had the complete version of the story to hand out later, but the copy of the story that I handed out ended with the words 'that night'. I read the story aloud, twice, at a normal pace as the students followed. Some listened as they followed the text and one or two tried to read with me.

Concetta and Mario

Concetta and Mario spend every Sunday afternoon working in the garden. One Sunday it started to rain before they had finished. They quickly packed their tools away but forgot the rake which was left lying across the front path. That night a man who was doorknocking for charity walked up their front path and tripped on the rake. He didn't see it in the dark and tripped over and broke his arm. (Hypothetical from *Legal Action*)

Telling stories

When I asked 'What is the story about? What do you think might happen next?' the students responded with a range of suggestions in a brainstorming session. I wrote the key words and phrases of each suggestion on the board as prompts for us to use in continuous storytelling. There was lots of laughing, some real nervousness and lots of staged panic as each class member contributed part of the story. The story soon covered the board. We used this text for an editing exercise and finished up with a short and unbelievable narrative piece. The students wanted to copy the piece into their books, as they often do with whatever is written on the board. This time I felt the motivation was satisfaction with their work, rather than the anxiety of missing something important or of missing something they needed to learn.

'Householders and the law'

To bring the students back to Concetta and Mario, I gave them the title of this section of the package, 'Householders and the Law' and asked them if their predictions of the story might be different. I had to explain the meaning of 'householders', a word I had taken for granted, to a few students. Suddenly I had visions of Northcote full of people holding onto their houses and clinging to their front doors, and of people leaning against their houses trying to hold them up! The explaining proved to be quite simple in the end, helped by several students who remembered junk mail and City Council notices addressed 'to the householder'.

The second set of predictions were different and included references to broken limbs, damages, costs and lawyers. We had quite a discussion about headings and titles giving us clues about the things we read. For one student in particular, the idea that it was all right to use 'clues' was like a release. I had thought my constant talking about, and demonstrating the use of context clues for prediction in reading was thorough. But I realised that the environment or the learning context had always been the classroom and the reading and writing lesson.

Reading wordly texts

'Householders and the Law' somehow shifted the parameters and allowed the classroom skills to be transferred to other environments and into the real world. The shift of the parameters also shifted the domains of language and literacy use. While Concetta and Mario was a personal narrative and our responses were also personal and exploratory, we were in the realm of Literacy for Self Expression. When we moved into 'Householders and the Law' we began to move into Literacy for Knowledge and Literacy for Public Debate.

The students were keen to see the full version of Concetta and Mario and followed the text as I read. Almost all the students wanted to read the story aloud:

> 'It helps if I know what it sounds like when I see it.'
>
> 'How can I remember?'
>
> 'It's not like Italian, I understand the patterns better if I say them. I need to hear and see.'

Reading aloud

This is one of the tensions I always find between theory and practice. I know that for many students reading aloud confuses rather than clarifies. But for some students, the success they get from the decoding gives them confidence and helps them realise they do 'understand' the text. When they hear and see the print, the words are familiar after all and the students can work on reading for meaning. Many students also feel they are making gains if they can say the words 'properly'. The trick is to provide strategies for reading aloud without reinforcing failure and confusion.

My focus was reading for meaning, so after we read the story together we cut the story into single sentences and rearranged them to make sense. (I had already prepared sheets with each sentence on a new line for this exercise.) Two students could do this very easily, so I broke the sentences into phrases and the students worked with these.

Dictation and dictagloss

This group loved dictation and dictagloss and spent five minutes trying to decide whether to use the humorous group story or the serious legal story. The compromise was the group story for dictation and the Legal Action story for dictagloss—'It's easier and we know it better'. The dictation was postponed for another session and we finished this part of the lesson with the dictagloss exercise. Dictagloss is a strategy for developing listening and writing skills, within the natural patterns of English. The text is read aloud using the natural rhythm and pace of the language, rather than breaking the text into 'manageable' phrases. Students are able to concentrate on meaning and writing the language as they understand it, rather than focusing consciously on the structure, punctuation and spelling required in dictation.

The law arrives on the scene

What happened to the legal studies? We finally got there an hour and a quarter into the two-hour class. I introduced the law by asking the questions from *Legal Action*. 'Can this man sue Concetta and Mario for his injury? Does it matter that they left the rake out by accident? Does it matter that they didn't know the man was coming to visit them?'

We talked about it for a while and summed up our discussion through the 'yes/no/I don't know' method, everyone registering a response to each question.

I read 'The Law Says' section to the group, elaborating, restating and rewording the text. In this process we were using Literacy for Knowledge, reading and listening to a factual piece of text. We checked out our answers by comparing them with that information. Surprise, anger and cynicism could fairly be used to describe the students response to 'the law':

> 'But he shouldn't be there.'
>
> 'That's not fair.'

Man bites dog; dog sues

A student recalled hearing about a burglar who had been attacked when he broke into a house. The burglar was suing the householder for his medical bills.

> 'The law is protecting the wicked.'
>
> 'This is not sensible.'
>
> 'This is the fault of the lawyers and the magistrates.'

As the group left the room they were debating the 'fairness' of the law. The students, in engaging in this discussion, were working in the domain of Literacy for Public Debate.

Session 2

When the students came into the next session, they were keen to continue the discussion about Concetta and Mario. The questions I had written on the board were:

- What is being careful?
- What is being careless?
- What is 'reasonable care'?

The discussion was hot and strong to say the least!

In an earlier session we had discussed the whole range of laws that govern and regulate our existence. Maria had become quite angry when she realised that there was a law about being born and several about dying! The possibility that Concetta and Mario could be remotely responsible for an accident to a total stranger who shouldn't have been on their property anyway, only deepened her sense of outrage:

> 'In the village we were sensible. We shout, we fixed the arm, we have a glass of wine, finished! But today nothing is finished.'

Folk law and formal law

The ideas of fairness, justice and common sense seemed to be removed from the law. The class discussed and argued around the terms ‘sensible’, ‘careful’ and ‘reasonable’ for about fifteen minutes. I had planned to start introducing the idea of Writing for Public Debate by sorting out ‘my opinion’ and then, hopefully, what supports my opinion. But Maria’s comments turned the discussion in another direction. The students were keen to discuss how their countrymen would traditionally have dealt with the problem and how they might deal with it now.

On the board I drew up this chart and wrote in the students’ comments.

Place (country)	Then	Now
Italy	Concetta & Mario & the visitor	Concetta & Mario & the visitor plus the police
Italy	C and M & their family, the visitor & his family	a magistrate
Cambodia	village elder, holy man, ‘magistrate’	a general
Italy	a priest	a magistrate
Turkey	all the men of the village (if it was bad)	

Seeing the relationships

As we looked at the table on the board, reflective comments from the students began to come quickly and, as I usually do, I wrote them in my notebook/diary.

> ‘Tonio’s village is like mine.’
>
> ‘Some are sensible.’
>
> ‘It (acting sensibly) is very hard to do today!’
>
> ‘In my country, it is decided quickly, with a gun. Whoever has the gun is right.’
>
> ‘... didn’t need laws, knew what to do.’
>
> ‘Back home, we took notice of the old people. They taught us what to do. And the priest.’

Modelling

Instead of using Writing for Public Debate, the writing task became Writing for Knowledge. A comparative piece seemed to fit. I modelled the idea on the board:

‘In the past we	But today...’
‘When I was a child	Now...’
‘In Greece we used to	Today in Greece, they...’
‘In Bulgaria	In Australia...’

The session ended with everyone working on their piece of Writing for Knowledge.

Session 3

In the next session we looked at the table (which I had rapidly copied) and reviewed the discussion. I also wrote some of the students' comments from the last session on the board, a practice that was by now familiar to the students. Although the students did not always recognise their own words, they did begin to reflect on the statements.

'We didn't need laws, we all knew what to do' drew the responses:

> 'They were [laws] really. But they didn't write them [down].'
>
> '... rules, or I think they are regulations.'
>
> 'Traditions.'

These comments rang a bell with me and I struggled to remember what Rob had said about precedent. While I was busy panicking and making a note to follow this up with Rob, the students continued the discussion about laws coming from traditional and common practice. They clearly understood the concept of precedent!

Loi began to talk about the impact of war and the political, economic and social changes that had occurred in his country. He linked these changes to the changes in the laws of his country and to the connection between the increasing number of laws and the increasing level of control over people. This was a much more serious note that the earlier good-humoured frustration about having laws to live, breathe and die by. For every student in the class Loi's comments brought back memories and the students gradually fell silent.

Writing as thinking

From this the students naturally moved into writing. Most students concentrated on writing and editing the 'in the past ...' piece but a few continued to focus on the discussion initiated by Loi. For them the writing took on a different role. It became a tool for thinking about and responding personally to Loi's comments.

One student, Boris, started to write but his thoughts were moving too quickly for his pen. He asked me to scribe for him:

> I start to know now. The law, it is useful if you know it. But this not mean that you know it and use it for good. The law can be used for, against men. And women too. Knowing the law makes men strong: but is it good to be more strong, more powerful to your neighbour?

Julio wrote:

> In my village law plain, easy. In Australia the law hard. In Loi's country the law dangerous.

We had used the idea of reasonable care to move into the area of critical pedagogy.

Evening class

Class Profile

The students in this group were NESB and ESB men and women. Five students were working, four were looking for work and one had retired. The non-English speaking background students were generally between their early forties and seventies (although one was twenty-seven), and had from three years primary education up to one year of secondary education. The English speaking students were in their late twenties to mid forties and had completed up to two years of secondary school.

Literacy assessment

Describing these students in terms of levels in VAELLNAF is complicated because the students in this group had a wide range of competence. Looking at the domains of Reading and Writing, the students were confident Level 3 in some and developing Level 2 in others. Also, in oral language, students were more confident in some communication situations than in others. While I took their level of literacy competence into consideration, I also considered their goals and learning styles when I placed them in the class.

Program

Most of the students were attending two 2-hour classes a week, in the evening. This series of sessions was also built around the 'Householders and the Law' section of *Legal Action*.

Session 1: sample lesson

With this group we didn't need to move through the prediction and sequencing exercises to help with the reading for meaning process or to familiarise students with the vocabulary. To introduce the session I asked the students to read the story. Most students made comments about the visitor's bad luck, about Concetta and Mario probably being upset and about similar experiences they had had or had heard of.

We moved straight into the questions included with the story in *Legal Action*. I wrote each question on the board and jotted down students' responses beside them:

Can the visitor sue Concetta and Mario for his injury?		
yes	8	students
don't know	3	students
Does it matter that Concetta and Mario left the rake out by accident?		
yes	6	'might not be found guilty' 'if they hurt themselves, then that's their problem'
no	2	'doesn't matter if they meant to or not'
maybe	2	'partly to blame'
Does it matter they didn't know the man was visiting them?		
yes	9	'shouldn't have been there, therefore he was responsible too'
no	1	'he was still careless'

We read the text under 'The Law Says' section to see if our existing knowledge and understanding was accurate. The text, written in plain English and containing conceptual and factual information, required Reading for Knowledge. The students could read the text but could not decide if their answers were right or wrong.

The Law Says:

You must take reasonable care that anyone who comes onto your land will not be hurt because of your carelessness. This applies even if you have not invited the person onto your land. If someone is hurt, you can be asked to pay compensation to the injured person. If the case goes to court a judge will decide whether you have taken reasonable care. You can get insurance called public liability insurance to protect you from being sued.

Interpreting the law

For the first question, the group realised that the visitor could sue 'but that doesn't mean he would win' and 'you can sue for anything these days'.

The answers to the second and third questions were not so clear.

> 'They were careless, but they didn't mean to hurt anyone.'
>
> 'It was their own yard.'
>
> 'But it was OK not to worry about the rake. They knew where it was and they weren't expecting visitors.'
>
> 'What is 'reasonable' anyway?'
>
> 'I always thought they were careless. It was dangerous. What if it had been a child?'
>
> 'What does liability mean?'
>
> 'Insurance companies will take your money for anything and then won't help you.'

The group was beginning to apply the information about the law to the circumstances of the hypothetical and to their general understanding.

Defining the problem

At this point I asked the group to try to identify what information we needed or what we had to do to answer the second and third questions. The group decided that we needed to know what 'reasonable care' meant and what was being 'careful' and being 'careless'.

In two groups the students worked on their understanding of 'reasonable care'.

> 'Perhaps "reasonable" won't be the same all the time'.
>
> '"Reasonable" has to be practical, to be possible.'
>
> 'Some care is reasonable. You can't predict everything.'
>
> 'Would a person have to take the same precautions at home as a gardener in Batman Park down the road? Shouldn't the gardener have to be more careful?'

Defining the concepts

At the end of their discussion each group presented their definition of 'reasonable care'. Legal terminology and concepts such as 'negligence' and 'liability' were emerging in the presentations and debates, and students were keen to explain these terms clearly. This was a clear demonstration of both Oracy for Knowledge and Writing and Reading for Knowledge. Because each group had to also be prepared to support their definitions and explanations with reasons and arguments, we were moving from Literacy for Knowledge into Literacy for Public Debate.

Uninvited guests

One group's reference to the gardener in the public park tied in with another question asked in *Legal Action*, 'Why should you be responsible for the safety of strangers who come to your house uninvited or without your permission?' Everyone was fired up over the discussion of 'reasonable care' and this question fed their enthusiasm. Everyone wanted to express their opinion. As the last activity had involved a largely oral exercise with discussion, presentation and debate, I encouraged the students to see this next activity as a writing and reading task. Students were to respond to this question in writing, supporting their opinion.

Writing an argument

Given the range of competence and experience of the students, I chose to model opinionative writing. I used the students' own arguments which they had presented in their responses to the 'reasonable care' exercise as the basis of the model. Rather than point out any gaps in the students' presentations, I encouraged the students to add to them and fill any gaps. I asked questions such as:

- Can you think of any more evidence to support this argument?
- Is this logical?
- Does it make sense?
- Can this be disproved?
- How?

For some students this was a task based on personal and/or popular opinion, with a check for logical argument and some evidence. For others the task included a research component, with reference to the notions of 'common good', the 'welfare state' and 'democracy'. We didn't have time to finish the piece of writing in class, so the students agreed to do some more work on it at home.

Outcomes

For each group of students, many of the issues raised by Concetta and Mario were the same. The students all had a broad general understanding of the legal concepts involved and were able to clarify and expand them. There was a growth in knowledge. Each group also covered a range of language and literacy domains. However, what was different for each group was the type of task undertaken in each domain.

Connecting Legal Studies and VAELLNAF

I enjoyed these sessions and I think the students did too. The material we used always provoked a lot of discussion and allowed for work in all the domains, but I wanted to see how it would fit with the competencies outlined in VAELLNAF and the *Certificates of General Education for Adults*.

Competencies and 'whole language'

Initially I looked at every activity in each session to try to fit each one to a competency. I found that it was impossible to separate many of the activities into a reading activity or a writing activity or an oral communication activity when most of the time the activities involved all three in a 'whole language' approach.

I then tried to attach one or more competencies to an activity. It was very difficult to identify a competence and make sure I had included the performance criteria, the range and conditions and an appropriate assessment task for all the activities in a session.

I began to think about what happens in a classroom. Between teachers and students we spend our time on trying old skills and knowledge in new contexts, practising and improving old skills, learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge, teaching new skills and providing knowledge, modelling, reflecting, evaluating. We don't spend all our time assessing and we don't plan every part of every session to teach or practise a discrete or separate skill. Often we teach something new in the context of something familiar or practised. The same should apply to our use of the competence statements.

Teaching the skills required for a student to reach a Level of Competence should not be done in isolation. We cannot teach Element 1.4 today, practise it tomorrow and the next day and assess on the fourth or fifth day. As we teach reading, writing and oracy in an integrated way, so should we teach the elements of competence and the range of competences. This makes the relating of curriculum to the competences much clearer and more sensible.

Domains, levels and elements

I propose now to look at the two groups I have described and examine the sessions in terms of the domains and where appropriate the competence levels and elements.

The day class

We began the first session talking about our gardens before I read the story of Concetta and Mario to the group. This was a useful way to model the domain of self expression or self exploration as was the brainstorming session that followed. We were able to model several characteristics of this domain at Level 1: 'familiar subject matter related to personal life and meaning'; 'recognisable people, setting or events'; 'narrative'; 'simple story'. The continuous storytelling, based on words and phrases supplied by the students in the brainstorm, continued the modelling. These were group activities and I think not appropriate for me to assess individual students on their reading and writing skills at Level 1.

If I had wanted to include an assessment task here, I could have asked the students to write about their own garden, a friend's garden or buying plants in a nursery. I would have been encouraging students to write one or two sentences about a familiar activity or experience and in a logical order. I would have assessed students for competence at Level 1: Element 1.1, Writing for Self Expression (*CGE for Adults*, p.20).

After reading the complete version of Concetta and Mario, we read the section 'The Law Says'. This piece is written in the Literacy for Knowledge domain. Many of the students found this difficult material and needed clarification and discussion to establish the meaning. If the students had read the material without assistance, they could have been assessed for competence at Level 3: Element 3.7, Reading for Knowledge (*CGE for Adults*, p. 46).

In the discussion, we were able to model the characteristics of Reading for Knowledge. The students could:

- identify the main point,
- recall prior knowledge on the topic and
- express a general opinion on the subject matter
  (I have discovered everyone has an opinion on the law.)

These are the main performance criteria for Level 1: Element 1.7, Reading for Knowledge (*CGE for Adults*, p. 26).

A possible activity, based on this discussion could have been to write an explanation of what might happen if someone gets hurt on your property (Level 1: Element 1.3, Writing for Knowledge, *CGE for Adults*, p. 22). For a student working at Level 3, a similar task based on the discussion might be to write an explanation of a landlord's responsibility for reasonable care.

In the second session with this group, the students began to compare the past and present legal problem-solving strategies of their home country. The table of information compiled on the board recorded students' knowledge and

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thinking. The writing task was structured around this information, with each student supplying additional information.

Some examples of their work were:

In the village the priest told us what to do. In Australia we go to court.

The head of the family was the father. The fathers made what was right and what wrong. Today it is changed.

In Greece we waited for the Junta. In Australia we go to the lawyer.

For this task, students might write two, three or more sentences. In this case the writing would include an item of 'familiar information in everyday commonplace language,' use the third person and be written in the present and the past tense. These would be the characteristics of competence for Level 1: Element 1.3, Writing for Knowledge (*CGE for Adults*, p. 22).

In the third session with this class, the discussion that Loi led combined several domains—Self Expression, Knowledge and Public Debate. Julio picked up the notion of public debate and wrote:

In my village law plain, easy. In Australia the law hard. In Loi's country the law dangerous.

This piece of writing demonstrates the characteristics of Level 1: Element 1.4, Writing for Public Debate (*CGE for Adults*, p. 23):

Write a statement of opinion on a familiar matter
Performance criteria:
    express a personal point of view
    express a statement, not proof, of an opinion
    express a point of view unconditionally
    write one or two sentences

It is clear to me now, that we were modelling and practising a range of the competencies described in *CGE for Adults* all the time. Assessment therefore should also be ongoing rather than an isolated 'add on'. Next time I use this material, I will design and present ongoing assessment tasks that support student learning.

Reference

Phillips, R. & McQueen, J. 1993 *Legal Action: A Resource for Adult Literacy and Basic Education Teachers*, Northcote Community Legal Service, Melbourne. [Available from ARIS, Level 9, 300 Flinders Street, Melbourne 3000. Telephone (03) 614 0255]

A text Up-Close

*Using **The World of Work** in the CGE for Adults*

Pam Baker

Not many long texts have been written explicitly for Adult Basic Education students. This article describes one such text and explains how Pam Baker integrates it into Certificate of General Education for Adults course being piloted at the Prahran campus of Swinburne University of Technology.

***The World of Work: A Reader for Adult Basic Education** (1992) by Rob McCormack is a history of work, written specifically for Adult Basic Education students. It presents ideas that are sophisticated and complex, but in language simple enough for non-confident adult readers. It provides a framework for understanding the forces that have shaped the world we live in by showing, in very readable prose, how the way we produce and distribute goods affects the rest of our lives. McCormack's text concludes by speculating about future changes flowing from computerisation.*

Pam Baker's article goes on to describe how the competencies described in the Certificates of General Education for Adults were incorporated into a course focusing on McCormack's text.

The course and the students

I have used *The World of Work* (McCormack, 1992) in a course piloting the *CGE for Adults* at the Prahran campus of Swinburne University of Technology. This full-time course was offered for 20 hours per week for 18 weeks or as a part-time course for 36 weeks. Many students were sent by the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) and were paid a training allowance. These classes were of mixed gender and ages, though younger males have predominated. None had finished their secondary education and many had been unemployed for lengthy periods or never employed. There were always some non-English speaking background students.

I taught the English component of the course, and covered the Reading and Writing and Oral Communication Streams of the *Victorian Adult Education Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework* (*VAELLNAF*). The students in my classes had roughly Level 3 competencies although there were occasional students at Level 2 or Level 4. I had the full-time students for 6 hours per week and the part-time ones for 3 hours per week.

I have developed a series of classes based on *The World of Work*. I think of these classes as going through the text in stages. The total number of sessions will vary slightly depending on the particular group at the time. I concentrate most time on Section 2 and use both of the other sections more briefly, as I will describe in the following pages.

By the time I introduce *The World of Work* I have already covered quite a lot of self-expression reading and writing using many examples of literature, especially Australian short stories for stimulus and models. I use writers like Tim Winton, Olga Masters, Marion Halligan and John Morrison.

Using *The World of Work*

In the course of McCormack's text students are introduced to many terms and concepts such as **socialism, liberalism, capitalism, bureaucracy, post-industrialism, nuclear family, mass media, free market, colonialism, nation states**—abstract terminology typical of expository prose in the knowledge domain.

The World of Work is divided into three sections; 'These Days', 'How Work Has Changed' and 'The Future'. Each section is broken up with headings into smaller parts. There is a strong contrast between the self-expressive style of Section 1 and the more formal expository prose of the last two sections.

Section 1 – 'These Days'

Our sessions with *The World of Work* begin with a topic called CHANGE which I tell my students will, in the coming weeks, lead us away from informal, personal, self-expressive writing into the Knowledge literacy of the Framework. (At the beginning of the course, students were given a simple sheet with a diagram of the four literacies, so they are already familiar with the concept of the four domains.) The changed nature of work for people of different generations is vividly conveyed in McCormack's text, as the following two excerpts from Section 1 show.

> **My Brother**
>
> In those days you learnt about farming by hanging around with your father or your boss when you were still a kid. The younger the better really. For example, my brother was an excellent shepherd even when he was still in primary school. He could work sheepdogs by whistling and get them to round up sheep or catch a particular sheep. He could even recognise sheep better than my father who always had to put a mark on them so he could remember.
>
> From *The World of Work*, pp. 16-17

Staying at school

Lots of things you used to learn on the job you now have to learn in school or at night school. In the old days you could say: 'just let me hang around here for a few days and I'll pick it up because I'm a good learner'.

Nowadays, unless you show your qualifications first they will hardly talk to you. These days they will hardly even give you a job unless you have done Year 12. That's why so many kids today are staying on and finishing school.

From ***The World of Work***, p. 17

We begin with a class discussion about how things have changed in our lifetimes. Even students who are only in their early twenties can think of things like no milk bottles or drive-ins, changes resulting from computerisation, disappearing coins and notes. Items are put on the board as we go. This classroom discussion will take 30–60 minutes.

Before we begin reading Section 1, students write for 20–30 minutes using the opening sentence 'Have you noticed how things keep changing?' They can concentrate on one area or write about several. I give them 5 minutes to reread and edit. It is not intended to be a polished piece of writing, more like a personal letter. I collect the writing for comments.

This leads on to reading Section 1, 'These Days', which begins with the sentence 'Have you noticed how everything keeps changing these days?' Section 1 is a personal reflective piece written from the point of view of a country 'lad', a little perplexed at the speed of change. It is full of personal stories like how his Dad could do mental arithmetic and how he learnt to grade a road because he had to sit on his Dad's grader blade to put more weight on it.

But it does introduce some later themes like ways of knowing—traditional knowledge and learning by watching and doing compared with schools and book learning. Students complete the reading at home.

At the beginning of the next class I ask them how they enjoyed 'These Days', what sort of person they think the author is, and whether he talked about things we had not already mentioned. We then discuss the qualities of the writing: its chatty informal style in tone and language (it expresses feelings, it's like someone talking, it tells personal stories).

It is sometimes repetitive, even rambling. Despite the headings there is no visible structure—bits about learning keep popping up. The writer expresses no abstract theories about the world, he just keeps wishing it wouldn't keep changing.

This section could, of course, be used as a stimulus for many pieces of personal writing. Students in my classes have already done a lot of this sort of writing in the first eight weeks or so of their six months course, using literature as a stimulus. I use this section to finish off our personal writing.

I return to the idea of change, pointing out that there are different sorts of change:

- social, economic and political changes in our lifetimes
  — as we have discussed and read about
- personal change
  — stages in adult development
- historical change
  — which we'll shortly consider.

We talk briefly about stages in development—referring to stages for children and then thinking of stages in adult life. Most students can think of puberty, mid-life crisis, retirement.

I give students a brief extract from Gail Sheehy's *Passages*, a book about the predictable stages and crises in adult life. There is some vocabulary development involved but the underlying message, the predictability and desirability of change, which means growth, is usually profound for many students. Sometimes I give them some comprehension questions about the passage, and then I ask them to list the *marker* events in their lives. We might share these in small groups.

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The growth of nation states

Factories needed large markets ...

In agricultural societies, there weren't really any countries as we know them. Each little area had its own ruling family of aristocrats who entered into alliances and went to war against other ruling class families. The main way of making friends with other families was by marrying your daughters off to them. Royal families still do this a bit.

so nations ...

However, with the shift to the factory system of production, there had to be a single government controlling larger areas so that goods could be bought and sold easily all over the country. So, modern countries or nation states were gradually formed to create a large market for the things produced by factories. Local governments were wiped out, local dialects were wiped out and a national system of government introduced. This provided a large, stable market for the goods produced by the factories.

Excerpt from Rob McCormack, *The World of Work*, pp. 46-47

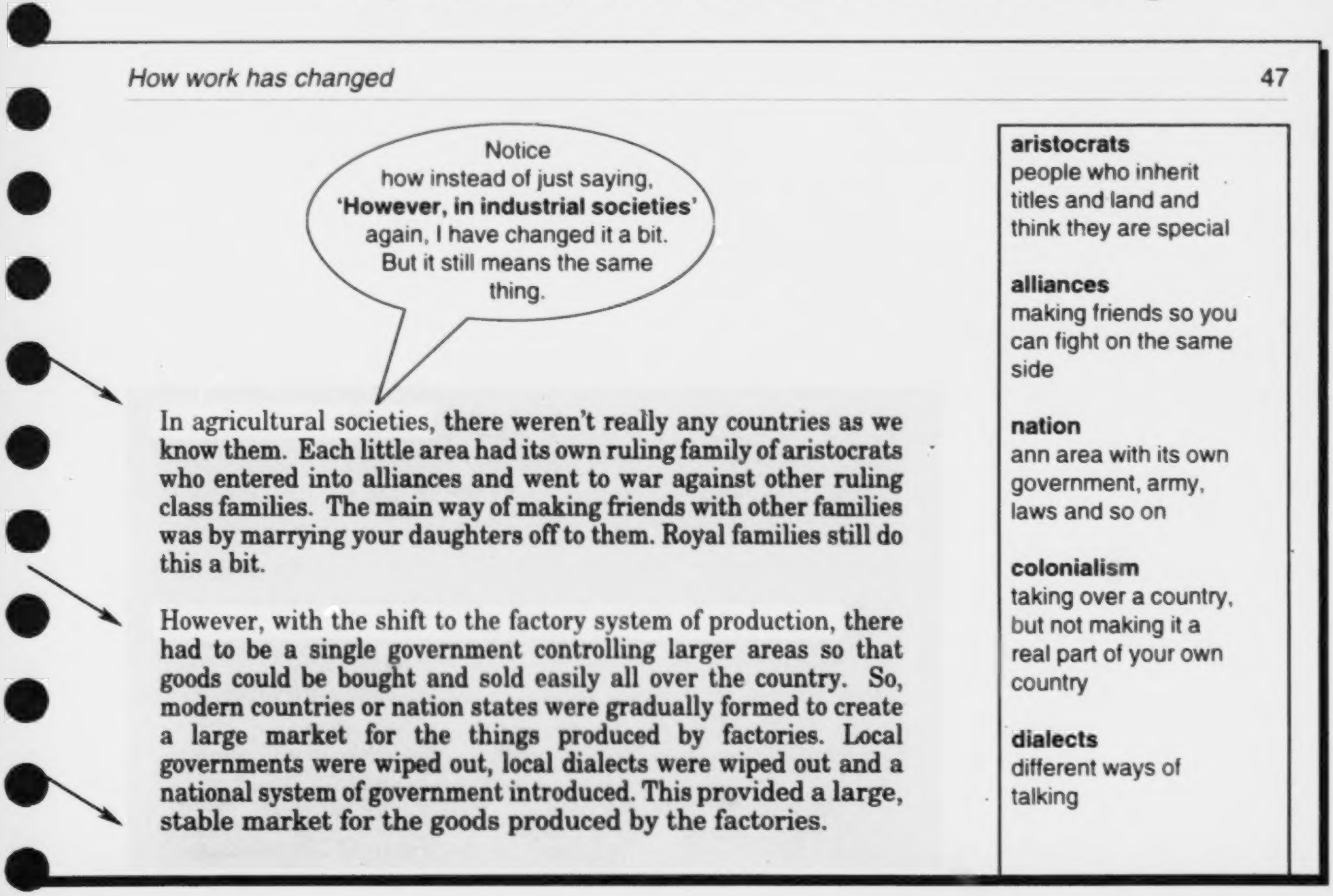
I finish this work by reading Michael Dugan's poem, 'To a Trainee Accountant', printed in *Yellow Wood*, which is about a man who builds such a settled life that change, which means growth, is impossible. Homework is to choose one marker event to write about. I tell the students this will be the last piece of personal writing we'll be doing during the course.

Section 2–'How Work Has Changed'

We now begin Section 2 of *The World of Work*. This marks our move from Literacy for Self Expression to Literacy for Knowledge. I remind students about the third type of change, historical change. We have a pre-reading discussion about the differences between agricultural and industrial societies. I jot these on the board as they arise.

Section 2, 'How Work Has Changed' (44 pages), deals mainly with the change from agrarian to industrial society, though there is a brief section at the beginning about the change from hunter/gatherer to agrarian. In this section the main text is only on the **left-hand pages** and the wide margins have a brief summary of the text in italics. For example, 'Here I announce my next topic which is how politics changed … from conflicts between kings and princes . . . to conflict between workers and owners.'

The **right-hand pages** are used for some analysis of the language, e.g. pointing out topic sentences, the language of comparison, different ways of saying the same thing, the way the text is structured. Also for summarising the



How work has changed 47

Notice how instead of just saying, **'However, in industrial societies'** again, I have changed it a bit. But it still means the same thing.

In agricultural societies, there weren't really any countries as we know them. Each little area had its own ruling family of aristocrats who entered into alliances and went to war against other ruling class families. The main way of making friends with other families was by marrying your daughters off to them. Royal families still do this a bit.

However, with the shift to the factory system of production, there had to be a single government controlling larger areas so that goods could be bought and sold easily all over the country. So, modern countries or nation states were gradually formed to create a large market for the things produced by factories. Local governments were wiped out, local dialects were wiped out and a national system of government introduced. This provided a large, stable market for the goods produced by the factories.

aristocrats	people who inherit titles and land and think they are special
alliances	making friends so you can fight on the same side
nation	ann area with its own government, army, laws and so on
colonialism	taking over a country, but not making it a real part of your own country
dialects	different ways of talking

topics there is a two-columned table, headed Agricultural and Industrial, listing the sixteen topics compared and highlighting the one relevant for each page and a glossary of words and phrases that may need precise definition. The aim here is to make Adult Basic Education (ABE) students comfortable and familiar with the way academic expository prose works.

Note-taking

After our pre-reading discussion I ask my students to scan the whole of Section 2, looking at the headings so that the reading will be more meaningful and we'll have some idea of what it is about. I also ask them to check to see if the text includes the things we mentioned in our discussion and/or whether it adds new ideas to those we had thought of. We will be using this section to practise essay writing.

We have already learned some note-taking techniques earlier in the course, particularly important techniques like:

Headings with sub-headings and minor points

1 MAIN HEADING
  a) *Sub-heading*
    i) minor point
    ii) minor point
  b) *Sub-heading*
    i) minor point
    ii) minor point
    iii) minor point
2 MAIN HEADING
  a) *Sub-heading*
    i) minor point
    ii) minor point

Tables: especially useful for comparisons

For example:

	Islam	**Christianity**
Deity	ALLAH	GOD
Holy Literature	KORAN	BIBLE

I remind the class about these techniques, or quickly review them if necessary. I tell students we are going to use these skills as a first step in the essay-writing process that we are now going to learn. Note-taking is useful for developing the competency of seeing the main points. I tell them it is like being able to see the bones or the skeleton under the flesh.

I ask students to suggest the best note-taking method for a piece that compares work in agricultural times with work in industrial times. We decide that a table with three columns will be clearest. I demonstrate what it will look like on the board.

	TYPE OF SOCIETY	
ASPECT of LIFE	Agrarian	Industrial
Energy Use	- Sun, wind, water, muscle power - renewable	- Fossil fuels (oil, coal, gas) - consumable
Making Things		
Land Ownership		

I stress clean, neat setting out, ruling off after each section because these notes are going to be used for later writing.

We do the first two or three sections, depending on student ability, on the board. Then after we have read each section and discussed what the main points are, students begin to make their own notes. I stress the importance of *brief* notes and that we are not rewriting the text. This is very difficult for some students. I give lots of guidance until they feel more confident.

Ideally students should have their own copies of *The World of Work*, but I have only one class set. At present the text is not easy to obtain. I like to give students copies of the left-hand pages of Section 2, that is the text proper, so that they can highlight and number points on the text.

Section 2 uses headings well and students are able to understand that expository prose has a clear structure. Sometimes I set a section to read and summarise in brief notes for homework. This helps me to assess how well students are able to identify the main points. We compare notes in the next class. We learn from our mistakes.

Vocabulary

As well as making notes on the content we learn new vocabulary. The teacher can use the glossary on the right-hand page which includes most words and phrases which may be unfamiliar to some students, for example 'dialect', 'hierarchy', 'prime time'. Many of these terms are used again and again so familiarity grows.

Students are encouraged to keep an ongoing glossary, especially including important terms like 'socialism', 'capitalism', 'bureaucracy'. This can provide dictionary work as well as the need to put terms in the student's own words. I revise work we have done on word-building (prefixes, roots and suffixes). I also encourage students to use these words/phrases orally as we discuss each section, or I might ask one student to explain a term to a student who has missed a class. Here we are developing the competency of explaining key words and phrases.

I relate words and phrases to students' own experience. Usually they know what bureaucracy means, though often with wholly negative concepts about it.

We talk about whether modern life would be possible without bureaucracy. The polarisation in politics also needs to be related to real parties and politicians in Australia. For example: Is the ALP socialist? To what extent? What are the main ideologies of our two major parties, equality versus freedom, for example? Does what we know about the Australian political scene fit with what we have read in *The World of Work*? We are relating knowledge in the text and prior knowledge, seeing perhaps that prior knowledge may have lacked 'knowledge', or may have lacked a conceptual framework.

Language devices

As with Section 1 we also examine the structure and nature of the language in Section 2, and identify the language devices that link the ideas. There are many suggestions for this sort of work on the right-hand side pages, including:

- the constant switching from agricultural to industrial
- the use of a topic sentence or sentences, usually at the beginning of a paragraph
- the building up or elaboration of an idea
- the way information about specific people fits into a general theory or point
- parallelism in sentences to help make meaning clear
- the use of summing up phrases which bring a number of different things together into a single idea
- the language of comparison: however, whereas, but, on the other hand, by contrast, instead
- the use of different ways of saying the same thing; 'in industrial societies' means the same as 'with the development of factories'.

Students recall our discussion about the qualities of personal writing and we note the differences in the style of writing in this section. For instance, there are no personal stories or personal feelings, the language is more formal, and third person is used rather than first person.

Writing

When we have finished reading and making notes on Section 2 students turn their notes into pairs of sentences, further developing their competency in the use of linguistic devices. We make a list on the board of words/phrases that we call the language of comparison: on the other hand, whereas, by contrast, instead, however, but.

The first section in the table above becomes:

> In agricultural societies renewable energy was produced by human and animal labour as well as by the sun, wind and water. However, in industrial societies energy was produced by fossil fuels such as coal and oil which are consumable.

We do two together on the board and then I leave students to finish the rest themselves. Usually this is finished as homework. I provide a model set of sentences after students have written their own, which are used for the next step—turning sentences into paragraphs, which then become an essay.

Modelling contrast

In agricultural societies energy was produced by human and animal labour as well as by the sun, wind and water; it was renewable. **However,** in industrial societies energy is produced by fossil fuels such as coal and oil, which are consumable.

In agricultural societies, products were made by hand in the village, for local consumption. **However,** in industrial societies, products were made on assembly lines by machines in factories situated in large towns.

In agricultural societies people were jacks-of-all-trades, or skilled craftsmen. **But** in industrial societies workers were de-skilled and performed repetitive, simple action jobs.

Goods were distributed locally by cart or on foot in agricultural societies; and communication was face to face. **By contrast,** in industrial society goods were distributed by roads, railways and canals; and the Post Office, telegraph, telephone and the mass media were developed to serve the need to communicate quickly, over long distances and to many people at once.

There was no highly developed system of organisation in agricultural societies. **By contrast,** in industrial societies, bureaucracies were developed to handle the more complex manufacturing and distribution of goods, and to organise and co-ordinate institutions such as hospitals and schools.

Although clock time was not important in agricultural society, in industrial society punctuality was vital, and children were sent to school, ostensibly to learn the three R's, but really to learn punctuality, obedience and rote learning so they would be good factory workers.

Extended families, often under one roof, were the norm in agricultural society. **But** with increasing mobility, industrial society's families became nuclear, consisting of Mum, Dad and the kids.

In agricultural societies people, including children, learnt by observing and working with other people, and knowledge was traditional. **However,** in industrial society science developed, which was a new way of knowing by observing and experimenting.

Modelling an essay

The task set is to write an essay with the title, 'Describe the changes that occurred when society changed from agricultural to industrial'. It will have about 4 main paragraphs, plus an introduction and conclusion. In our notes we have more than 4 headings so we discuss which areas could be grouped together. For example, group energy use, making things, distributing things together, families and teaching and learning together, and organisation and communication together. I stress that there is more than one way to do this. Usually I ask students to do this in pairs.

Preparing to write, and comparing

Then we discuss whether we can just write our sentences down as they are. We can, but we will need linking sentences so that the essay will flow smoothly. To prepare we recall earlier work on topic sentences and discuss what goes in an introduction and a conclusion. I ask for generalisations about agricultural societies and industrial societies, for example simple/complex, slow/fast, changing/unchanging, and suggest that these words might be used in conclusions. We talk about what phrases and sentences we might use in our introductions and conclusions.

At this time I move around the class while students are attempting this, offering help and praise as needed. I want everyone to experience success. Sometimes students have to re-write to achieve the formal tone.

After students have written their own essays (which really involves only writing an introduction, a conclusion, and some linking sentences), I again provide a model or I might use a student's essay as a model.

We compare the introductions and conclusions we have written, looking at the way paragraphs have been linked together, and discuss any difficulties.

Model essay

Introductory paragraph

The nature of society changed in all aspects with the change in the production and distribution of goods which occurred when society became industrial instead of agricultural.

In agricultural societies energy was produced by human and animal labour as well as by the sun, wind and water; it was renewable. And products were made by hand in the village for local consumption. People were jacks-of-all-trades, or skilled craftsmen. However, in industrial society energy was produced by fossil fuels such as coal and oil, which are consumable. And products were made on assembly lines by machines in factories situated in large towns by workers who were de-skilled and who performed repetitive simple action jobs.

Furthermore, the means of transport, communication and organisation changed too. In agricultural societies goods were distributed locally by cart or on foot; and communication was face to face. By contrast, in industrial society goods were distributed by roads, railways and canals; and the Post Office, telegraph, telephone and the mass media developed to serve the need to communicate quickly, over long distances and to many people at once. There was no highly developed system of organisation in agricultural times. By contrast, in industrial society bureaucracies were developed to handle the more complex manufacturing and distribution of goods, and to organise and co-ordinate institutions such as hospitals and schools. Clock time was not important in agricultural times. Whereas with industrialisation punctuality was vital, and children were sent to school ostensibly to learn the three R's, but really to learn punctuality, obedience and rote learning to be good factory workers.

There were other changes to society, too. Extended families, often under one roof, were the norm in agricultural societies. But with increasing mobility, families in industrial societies became nuclear, consisting of Mum, Dad and the kids. In agricultural societies people, including children, learnt by observing and working with other people, and knowledge was traditional. However, in industrial society science, which was a new way of knowing by observing and experimenting, developed.

And finally the nature of politics changed. In agricultural societies ordinary people were not concerned with politics. But with industrialisation a tension developed between employers and employees and led to the development of trade unions. The term 'liberalism', based on the idea of a free market, was adopted by the business owners, The term 'socialism', based on the idea of workers getting fair treatment from business owners. emerged. The Cold War was a global tension between the West, which favoured liberalism, and the East, which favoured socialism. Nation states developed, and because the new industrialised societies needed more and more raw materials they colonised parts of Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Concluding paragraph

So we see, therefore, great changes between the slow, simple unchanging agricultural society of the past and the fast, complex modern world.

The topic sentences are in bold. Notice they contain linking words such as 'furthermore', 'too', and 'finally'.

Section 3 – 'The Future'

The third section in *The World of Work*, 'The Future', is the longest section in the book, 77 pages, and it is written in a similar expository style to Section 2, but with some movement into argument. The italic summaries continue in the left-hand margins, but the right-hand pages are used to introduce other points of view and concerns, in the form of comic-book-style speech bubbles. This provides another contrast between personal speech-like writing and more formal academic prose.

I have always spent most time on Section 2 although obviously this third section could be used for extended class work, for instance with some creative thinking about how technology could be used to enrich lives rather than displace workers. In my six-month program I don't have time to do this in great detail (although I do allow time for discussion about long-term unemployment), with all the other things I want to do as well. I still have Public Debate to explore, and although this text could be used as a basis I prefer to use other sorts of texts as well, such as Letters to the Editor, short newspaper articles, and editorials.

What I do with Section 3 is brainstorm about work in the future, leading students to realise that computerisation is as great a change as the introduction of machines was. This discussion usually takes at least an hour. We begin to read Section 3 in class and students finish the reading at home.

Next class we discuss the writing of a second essay, 'What will Work be like in the Future?'. I try to help them see the wood, not be overwhelmed by the trees. I ask, 'What is the single most important factor that will influence work in the future?'

The second essay

We then go through the various headings we used with Section 2 and talk about how computerisation will affect each area, for example family life, transport, communication, politics. We work out a plan: we discuss headings for the main areas we might write about, for example, Mind Work, Communication, Home and Work, Flexible Manufacturing. What might go in the introduction and conclusion? What general statements can we make? Can we compare the introduction of machines with the introduction of computers?

This time the essay will not cover all the material they have read about. Students must *select* what is important or most interesting to them. This is a more difficult task than the first guided essay. It often confirms my opinion about which students have Level 4 competencies. It is perhaps not a task for a mainly Level 2 class.

Relating this to the competencies

The description of reading and writing competencies in the *CGE for Adults* helps me articulate what I instinctively do with classes and is a tool for more objective assessment.

The Writing Stream

Level 3: Element 3.1, Writing for Knowledge (Performance Criteria) (*CGE for Adults*, p. 42) can also be demonstrated by students in the essay tasks I set, for instance, where they are asked to:

- classify different parts or topics of a knowledge area in relation to each other
  — for example, deciding which points can go together in a paragraph
- create a formal tone by using and defining abstract and technical terms appropriate to the subject
  — I keep returning to the differences between personal informal writing and formal expository writing and stress that students must use the latter in their essays
- attempt to condense ideas, processes, descriptions and/or explanations into abstract nouns
  — they have a chance to demonstrate this particularly with the essay on the future
- sequence facts/explanations into an orderly system
  — in the first essay they are guided through this process, and then in the second they must try to develop their own order
- introduce paragraphs with a topic sentence
  — during our reading I often ask students to identify topic sentences; I require topic sentences in essay tasks, (see model essay above)
- spell with considerable accuracy
- use standard grammar with considerable accuracy.

Spelling

The spelling competencies (Level 3: 'considerable accuracy', Level 4: 'high degree of accuracy') are occasionally a stumbling block. I have had several students who can demonstrate all the Level 3 or 4 competencies, except that their spelling is more Level 2. I spend some time on spelling strategies that can be used, but these involve steady consistent application which is up to the student.

But overall writing competency is something more than a number of discrete skills checked off on a list. I require my students to submit a writing folio at the end of the course, with 10 pieces of writing, at least two from each literacy domain. This gives me an overall picture of their writing as well as evidence of different competencies.

The Reading Stream

Assessing reading competencies in an objective way is much more difficult; however, before I start work with *The World of Work* I try to make some objective assessment of reading competencies in the Self Expression domain by giving students an unseen short story. I ask them to say what the main theme/idea of the story is, to try to work out the meanings of words and phrases from the context, and to describe characters and give evidence for what they say from the text.

I have not used any 'separate' assessment task in the Knowledge domain. The note-taking homework gives me an indication of competency in selecting main points. The transference of the knowledge of language devices in reading to their own writing also demonstrates competency to me. But I find I still want to rely on close observation of classroom behaviour, particularly contribution to class discussion (which is more difficult for quieter students), and also individual checking of understanding while students are working independently. I don't want to hold a checklist in my hand while I do this, but out of class time I can use a checklist to check my intuitive assessment.

Level 3, Reading for Knowledge

If we look at the Performance Criteria students are asked to demonstrate for Reading Level 3: Element 3.7 in the Knowledge domain (*CGE for Adults*, p. 46), the class work I have described has given students opportunities to develop these competencies:

- identify the main points or ideas presented
  — note-taking work
- identify the language devices that link the ideas in the text
  — discussion as reading progresses, writing pairs of sentences, linking sentences in essay
- explain the meaning of key words and phrases
  — vocabulary work as reading progresses
- identify missing, misleading or questionable information, evidence, sequence or examples
  — the rearrangement of headings, perhaps, but I do this rather than the students, so this particular competency is not dealt with very much. There certainly is not a lot of material about women but I have never known students to point to this. Perhaps this competency is too sophisticated for Level 3?
- describe the world view conveyed explicitly or implicitly in the text
  — I talk about the author's world view at various points while we are

reading Section 2 of *The World of Work*. Last year a student brought it up himself: 'This bloke's pretty left wing, isn't he' and then hastened to add that he didn't mean that he was wrong! A good place to bring this up first is with 'The rise of the factories' section, p.34, or 'The assembly line', p.36. I ask students to think about how a writer with right-wing leanings might describe some of these things.

- describe the relationship between knowledge presented in the text and prior knowledge
  — this is done with a final evaluation of the work we cover using *The World of Work* as well as during the reading. I ask 'What have you learnt from reading this book?'

Oral Communication Stream

I assess Oral Communication through everyday classroom behaviour, although part of the course does involve giving a short talk to the class, with peer assessment, on a well-known subject in either the Knowledge or Public Debate domain.

Other ways of using *The World of Work*

Students at lower levels could also be introduced to the important ideas and concepts of *The World of Work*, using parts of the text or perhaps headings and topic sentences, or using the cartoons as starting points for discussion and writing. They might then list the facts about agricultural society and industrial society.

One tutor I know who has used *The World of Work* has concentrated on Section 2 for some of his course. He feeds in other material representing other positions on the workplace, for example anthropological material about Koori working habits with discussion about how people are socialised into work. He suggests that VCE Australian Studies material can be very useful for Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) students. He also uses the film *Rosie the Riveter* which focuses on working women.

Another tutor found the text a catalyst with an all-male Workplace Basic Education class, with widely varying abilities, at a government aircraft factory. He used it largely for reading and discussion rather than for writing, particularly discussions about technology, restructuring and organisation. He found different men latched on to different parts of the book. For instance one Italian student particularly related to the village life story which is told at the beginning of Section 2.

For non-English speaking background students the author has included a list of idioms, cultural knowledge, and everyday terms which may not be familiar.

Conclusion

The World of Work provides a useful resource for Adult Literacy and Basic Education teachers anxious to equip their students with some critical understanding of the modern world and an appreciation of the differences between personal writing and expository prose. It fits well into the *Certificates of General Education for Adults within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework*, with its four literacies. It provides examples of Literacy for Self Exploration, Literacy for Knowledge and Literacy for Public Debate, but in language that is not too difficult nor dense for the non-confident and/or inexperienced reader likely to be found in ALBE classes.

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Making the connections

Explaining the CGE for Adults to students

Sara Lyons

Teachers are considering how the competency-based approach of the ***Certificates of General Education for Adults*** *within the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF) will affect the structure of their teaching. Administrators are considering the impact these two documents will have on the organisation of classes. But what about students?*

This paper is a practical explanation of how students can make use of some aspects of VAELLNAF. It includes several forms which could be modified for use with different groups of students, and discusses reasons why the forms were developed.

The forms include: simple check-list of skills expected of students, learning-to-learn sheets, record-keeping forms and explanations of the four different styles of writing and accompanying models.

The paper emphasises a holistic approach to literacy teaching, the importance of connecting various types of reading and writing tasks, and connecting what students bring to a task and the task itself.

The past and the new competency-based approach

In the past, Holmesglen College of TAFE students received an attendance and participation certificate. Descriptions of set competencies, at particular levels, were not given to students. Students were invited to attend classes at a higher level at the teacher's discretion, following consultation with the student. Curriculum was based on students' needs and goals as interpreted and expanded on by teachers.

When the document *Draft Frameworks (Adult Basic Education Accreditation Frameworks Project—Draft)* was distributed in January 1992, teachers were keen to understand the implications for their teaching. The document described what was already good practice in the field of Adult Basic Education. It organised curriculum into four different levels with four different types of reading and writing genres, each with a different purpose and aimed at a different audience. It gave teachers across Victoria a common terminology regarding the teaching of literacy and a common structure within which to organise literacy programs.

But how was I, as a teacher, going to convey this new structure—with its four literacy domains, its four different levels, each level with its specific skills—to my Level 1 class without confusing or overwhelming them?

In June 1992, the Basic Education teachers at Holmesglen College rewrote in simple English the four levels of the *Draft Frameworks* for their students. We found this provided the students with a greater understanding of the areas and skills they were working on and more understanding of the theories behind work done in class. We also included forms for recording student goals, and for setting up student folios.

In second semester, 1992, I taught a class of twenty Basic Education students. The majority were long-term migrants from Greece, Italy, Turkey, Afghanistan and Iran, and five were native-born Australians. The class met for two sessions of two hours each per week. There were two trained volunteer tutors in each session. The class had been meeting since the beginning of 1992. It was a high Level 1 class. Most students had improved their reading skills and could read articles from the *Herald Sun* with good comprehension. Their writing was increasing in length and complexity but contained varying degrees of grammatical and lexical errors. The majority of these students would go on to a Level 2 class in 1993.

A series of forms—for eleven learning situations

Setting the goals

Students needed to know the standard of their level and the skills needed to achieve the set standard. They also needed to understand the broad philosophy behind the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF) and the requirements of the different modules of the *Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGE for Adults)*, and they needed to be convinced of the positive benefits this new structure offered them. If it reminded them of past structures and courses where they had failed to meet a set standard or a required competency, students might be alienated by the new *CGE for Adults*. But if their introduction to it was handled carefully, they could be empowered by its new approach.

Traditionally, basic education classes have been based on students' immediate individual needs and their short-term and long-term goals. This remains an essential focus. It is important that the requirements for the *Certificates* are met within this focus and not imposed on students without their voices being heard in the negotiation of curriculum.

To help students identify their goals, I developed a **Goals List (Form 1)**. It was divided into three categories—practical reading/writing, personal reading/writing and factual reading/writing—to emphasise three of the four domains of the reading and writing modules of the *CGE for Adults*.

Form 1: Goals List

Goals List

Name ______________________________ **Date** ____________

Next to each of these goals write:

Yes — if you would like to know more about this.

No — if you know it well already.

Practical Reading and Writing

1.		read signs (road signs, shopping signs, safety signs)
2.		read labels and instructions
3.		read and write shopping lists
4.		read calendars and read clocks
5.		use train and bus schedules
6.		use TV guides
7.		read menus and recipes
8.		use a phone book—both white & yellow pages
9.		fill out forms
10.		read bills, quotes and accounts
11.		do personal banking—use a Flexiteller & write cheques
12.		read maps and use a Melway directory
13.		use a dictionary and use a simple thesaurus
14.		take part in school-related meetings and events
15.		fill out job application forms
16.		apply for a library card and use a library
17.		get a driver's licence
18.		read leases and contracts
19.		register to vote
20.		join a self-help group
21.		use a computer

Form 1: Goals List (continued)

Practical Reading and Writing		
1.		read & write family notes & phone messages
2.		read & write personal letters, postcards & greeting cards
3.		improve handwriting
4.		read for enjoyment (what kind of books?)
5.		write for myself—a diary, advice for others, my life story, my opinions, stories, poems etc.
6.		read to my grandchildren
7.		help my children with their homework
8.		join a club or community group
Factual Reading and Writing		
1.		read information related to health
2.		read the newspaper. Which parts?____________________
3.		write letters to the editor of a newspaper or magazine
4.		read magazines. Which ones? ____________________
5.		read to get information. What subjects? ________________
6.		take notes when reading for information
7.		read and write work reports
8.		read to find out about jobs
9.		go to classes to learn something new
10.		go to a job training program
11.		pass a work-related test
12.		write business letters, letters of complaint etc
13.		read graphs and charts in the newspaper
List any other goals that are important to you		
Choose the two goals which are most important to you right now		

Literacy skills needed

Prior to looking at the Goals List, my Basic Education class had a discussion about the work we had covered in the first semester and we gave examples of how we had used maps, graphs, the phone book, lists, forms, newspapers, library skills, interviewing skills etc. when working on the topics of the environment and travel. This led to a discussion about what it means to be literate in Australia today and what assumptions society makes about literacy skills. We also spoke about the skills that would be important in the future—computer skills, team work, problem-solving, thinking critically etc. We had already decided on our next theme—growing old in Australia—and we discussed various literacy and numeracy tasks that we could incorporate into this theme.

I then introduced the Goals List as a list I had compiled from the goals of some of my past students. It is not a comprehensive list. Then we filled in the Goals List. In small groups, students, with a volunteer tutor in each group, compared their personal goals and compiled a group list. The Goals List was a way of exploring the many aspects of literacy and numeracy which could be incorporated into our class work and an opportunity for us as a group to prioritise these tasks.

Introducing competencies to students

To introduce the competencies, I rewrote them in plain English using advocacy language ('can-do' statements). Then I added the list of background skills and techniques I wanted this particular class to address and called it **Skills Sheet for Reading and Writing (Form 2).**

My purpose was to let the students know the basic skills, tasks, strategies and information that I wanted them to be aware of. The Skills Sheet became a discussion paper and students were invited to make suggestions to alter it. The process of reworking the competencies, followed by class discussion and altering the list to meet the needs of the particular class, can be valuable. People do not learn things in a strict hierarchical manner. Adults have learned so many things in so many different ways and at a variety of different levels that often there are gaps left in a person's skills or knowledge. This meant that the competencies set out in the Skills List did not have to be learnt in any set order.

Form 2: Skills Sheet for Reading and Writing

Skill Sheet for Reading and Writing

Student's Name ____

Tick the things you feel you can confidently do now. Come back to this list and as you gain skills, tick them off as the year goes by. Keep this list in your folio.

Note: There is no set order in which to learn these skills. They are numbered so the list is easier to use.

When reading

1.		I guess what the reading is about before I begin reading by looking at the illustrations and graphics, and reading the headings, introduction and conclusion.
2.		I can guess what an unknown word means by understanding what the sentence is about and from what I already know about the subject.
3.		I know that I learn by making mistakes and trying again.
4.		I link what I read to what I already know about a subject.
5.		I can pick out the main points in a story and record them (notes, time-lines or mind maps).
6.		I can re-tell a story in my own words.
7.		I can give the main point of view of the author.
8.		I can give my opinion on a story.
9.		I can read signs, pictures, graphs, charts, maps, cartoons, recipes and instructions, as well as articles, stories, letters, books etc.
10		I read parts of newspapers and magazines.
11.		I keep a record of what I read in my folio.

When writing

1.		I can write or print clearly.
2.		I can fill in simple forms.
3.		I can write in complete sentences and I know when a sentence is complete.

Working with memory and the senses

When students come into Basic Education classes, they are embarking on the first step of an educational pathway that can lead to further vocational training or higher education. The students need to be introduced to study skills. Some of these skills are how to organise their time, how to set goals and prioritise them, how to work with their memories, how to link new ideas to their past knowledge, how to pick out main ideas, and how to record, monitor and assess their progress. As they acquire these skills, students become increasingly responsible for their own learning. My purpose was to give them the information and the tools which would enable them to become independent learners.

A simple explanation of brain function can help students understand how memory is stored and can lead them to have more effective learning techniques, and more realistic expectations of their likely progress in learning.

Short-term memory

Memory is divided into long-term and short-term memory. All stimuli which we take in at any given moment are part of our short-term memory. Only a few items (five to seven) can be transferred at any one time from short-term to long-term memory. Thus students will be more successful if they only learn a little at a time (between five and seven spelling words) or if, when they are reading, they concentrate on the most important ideas, knowing their potential to take in ideas is limited to about five to seven things at a time.

Long-term memory

To transfer a thought from short-term to long-term memory involves connecting a new thought with existing ones. The more complex the interconnections are, the more securely the thought is embedded in the person's long-term memory. Thoughts will be lost or become virtually irretrievable if they are not quickly connected up with a person's past ideas. Thus connections with past experiences and prior knowledge are essential. Lateral thinking, or approaching a problem from one or more perspectives, increases the ways in which a person can retrieve and connect up various solutions.

The senses

Another way in which a person can remember thoughts is if the person repeats them using as many different senses as possible. Smells, temperature, sounds, touch, visual patterns, colour and emotional states associated with thoughts are strong reminders of those thoughts and thus they are more easily retrieved from the long-term memory. Because these stimuli are controlled by the right side of the brain, they transfer with relative ease to the long-term memory as compared with logical thinking, language skills and mathematical skills which are controlled by the left hemisphere of the brain. A person who is in a relaxed state of mind is thought to process information forty times faster than a person in a more alert state of mind.

Building on positive experiences

The forms **Ways of Learning** and **How I Learn Best . . . (Forms 3** and **4)** are designed to encourage students to think about positive learning experiences they have had and to encourage them to translate these positive experiences into learning strategies in order to program themselves to be positive about their learning abilities. Both forms were introduced by having small group discussions about the students' best learning experiences and their most negative learning experiences. These were really fruitful discussions and helped the students define what they felt they needed for a successful learning environment while accommodating the learning styles of individual students.

Form 3: Ways of Learning

Ways of Learning

Name ______________________________

People learn in different ways all the time. Learning takes place in and out of the classroom. For you, some ways may work better than others. Here is a list of some ways of learning.

Tick the ones you think are important to you. Give an example of what you learned using each way.

1.		By listening to a teacher, I learned how to
2.		By watching an 'expert' and then trying it myself, I learned how to
3.		By listening to TV or radio, I learned how to
4.		By doing something and if that didn't work trying something else (trial and error), I learned how to
5.		By following written instructions, I learned how to
6.		By teaching someone else, I learned how to
7.		By making mistakes and understanding why I made those kinds of mistakes, I learned how to

Form 4: How I Learn Best . . .

How I Learn Best . . .

Name ______________________________

Label each of the following:

a — very important for me
b — sometimes important for me
c — not important for me.

I learn best . . .

1.		when I have decided I want to learn.
2.		when I know I need to learn.
3.		when I know I can learn.
4.		when I am treated with respect.
5.		when I don't have a lot of personal problems.
6.		when someone else inspires me.
7.		when friends, family, classmates & teachers are supportive.
8.		when I'm not afraid to make mistakes.
9.		when I think my work should be perfect.
10.		when my wife/husband believes I'm doing very well.
11.		when I get positive and immediate feedback.
12.		when someone else does it for me.
13.		when I am not tired.
14.		when I am not distracted.
15.		when I am physically fit and eat good food.
16.		when I am relaxed.

Recording reading

In the early part of the course a **Student's Reading List (Form 5)** is included. Most students could read stories written by other students, abridged texts, short newspaper or magazine articles about topics that interested them, or children's books. The process of recording what they had read and deciding what type of reading it was, reinforced an understanding of the four domains and provided examples of these domains. It also gave the students a chance to recommend books they had read and encourage other students in the class to read them.

Form 5: Student's Reading List

Reading List		
Name		
1.	Title	
	Author	
	Type of writing	
	Date started	Date completed
	My opinion	
2.	Title	
	Author	
	Type of writing	
	Date started	Date completed
	My opinion	

Book Review (Form 6) is introduced later in the course and is included under the domain of Factual Writing. These questions emphasise pre-reading activities and help students make predictions about what the book may be like. It also asks the students to give a substantiated opinion of the book.

Form 6: Book Review

Book Review	
Name	
1.	The title of the book is
2.	The author of the book is
3.	The illustrator of the book is
4.	The publisher of the book is
5.	The date it was first published was
6.	The place it was first published was
7.	Some other books written by the same author are
8.	The author has dedicated the book to
10.	The recommended Australian price is
11.	Read the blurb on the back cover, if the book has one. Does it make the book sound interesting?
12.	The main characters in the book are:
13.	The setting for the story is
14.	The time at which the story takes place is
15.	Summarise the story:
16.	What did you like about this book? What did you dislike about this book?

Recording and modelling writing

The **Folio Sheet** is designed as a record-keeping device applicable to any of the four levels of adult basic education. Students have to choose which pieces they would like to include in their folios. Students are also asked to include their first and second drafts. 'Writing in class' is writing done by students without help other than reference to books or class notes. It is stapled inside the front cover of the students' folios and their pieces of writing are clipped into their folios.

With this particular class, more time was spent on personal writing so the **Sample Folio Sheet (Form 7)** has been adjusted to show this emphasis.

Form 7: Sample Folio Sheet

Folio Sheet

Student's Name: ______________________________ Class: Migrant Literacy

1. Writing for Self Expression

Title: **Introducing My Classmate**
date of first draft __________
date of final draft __________

Title: **My House**
date of first draft __________
date of final draft __________

Title: **A Trip I Shall Always Remember**
date of first draft __________
date of final draft __________

Title: **Memories of my First Home**
date of first draft __________
date of final draft__________

Writing in class—title: **Postcards to Friends**
date ___________

Writing in class—title: **Neighbours I Have Had**
date ___________

2. Writing for Practical Purposes

Title: **Directions from My Home to Holmesglen**
date of first draft _______
date of final draft ________

Title: **Formal Letter asking for information**
date of first draft ________
date of final draft ________

Writing in class—title: **Instructions to friends staying at my home for a week while I'm away**
date ___________

Writing in class—title: **Filling in a form to join the library**
date ___________

Form 7: Sample Folio Sheet (continued)

3. Writing for Knowledge

Title: **Book Review**
first draft—date __________
final draft—date __________
Title: **Factual report using references**
date of first draft __________
date of final draft __________
Writing in class—title: **Summary of Behind the News**
date ______
Writing in class—title: **Summary of a newspaper article**
date ______

4. Writing for Public Debate

Title: **It is better to live in the country/It is better to live in the city**
date of first draft __________
date of final draft _________
Title: **This ad tells us the truth/This ad lies to us**
date of first draft__________
date of final draft _________

5. One Topic Written in the Four Different Styles

Topic **My Favourite Place**
Personal Writing – *What my favourite place is like*
Practical Writing – *How to get to my favourite place*
Factual Writing – *Facts about my favourite place*
Public Debate – *Why it is the best place on earth/Why it is not the best place on earth*
Topic **To be chosen by student** (use model of tea)

6. Oral presentations/Discussions/Debates

a. Personal: title ____
____ date _________
b. Practical Directions: title ____
____ date _________
c. Factual: title ____
____ date _________
d. Public Debate: title ____
____ date _________

Form 8 is an example of a model of writing which offers a clear format for beginner writers to follow.

Form 8: Introducing My Classmate

Introducing My Classmate

Questions:

1. What is your name? Do you have any nicknames? Are you a new student at Holmesglen?
2. When is your birthday? What country were you born in? How many brothers and sisters do you have? Where do you come in your family?
3. How many years have you lived in Australia? Where do you live now? Do you have any children? How many children do you have? What are their names and ages?
4. What are your hobbies or interests?

Sample interview:

My teacher's name is Sara Lyons. She has worked at Holmesglen College for four years.

Sara's birthday is on the 27th of July. She was born in the United States of America, in the city of Marquette, in the state of Michigan. She has five sisters and one brother. She is the third child in her family.

Sara came to Australia twenty-two years ago. She is now living in Melbourne with her Australian husband and their three daughters. The children are Jessie, who is thirteen years old, Darcie, who is nine years old and Alice, who is four years old.

Sara enjoys teaching Migrant English, gardening, travelling, reading, sewing and aerobics.

Words to use:

1. Classmate's name.
2. Names of the months: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December.
3. Names of countries: Australia, Greece, Poland, Vietnam, Thailand, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran, Italy.
4. Family: sister, brother, husband, wife, daughter, son, children.
5. Hobbies: gardening, sewing, knitting, crocheting, reading, pottery, travelling, car repairs, stamp-collecting.

Sample from class

My Classmate Joanna

My classmate's name is Joanna Dekmetzian. She has been coming to Holmesglen College for two years.

Her birthday is on the 23rd of February. She was born in Greece. For eighteen years she lived in Pires, a city in Greece. She has only one younger sister.

Joanna came to Australia in 1957. She had her baby son with her. He was eight months old. She first lived in South Melbourne and now she lives in Surrey Hills. She has four children and four grandchildren.

Joanna enjoys sketching and dancing. Her profession is fashion designing.

The four literacies

A Guide to the Four Different Writing Styles (Form 9) is to help students focus on the main differences between each writing style described in the *CGE for Adults*.

First, the students in small groups brainstormed what they thought each of the four writing styles would be like. They wrote a list of the characteristics of each style on butchers' paper. Then the students were given different samples of writing from newspapers, magazines and pamphlets and they decided which type of writing each example represented. They could see that some pieces may have more than one purpose and may in fact have characteristics of two or more styles. Then we looked at **A Guide to the Four Different Writing Styles** and used it as a summary of the work we had already completed.

Form 9: A Guide to the Four Different Writing Styles

Writing for Self Expression		
1. **Purpose**	a)	to describe places, people or events that I know about already
2. **Tone**		The author writes as if he/she were talking to friends.
3. **Structures used**	a)	*I think, I feel, I imagine, etc*
	b)	my favourite, my family, my best ____ etc
	c)	past tense most of the time
	d)	lots of adjectives to get the reader to use his/her imagination
4. **How it is written**	a)	informal, relaxed style
	b)	doesn't have to be true
	c)	may be funny, may be sad
5. **Examples**		diaries, stories, autobiographies etc.
Writing for Practical Purposes		
1. **Purpose**	a)	to instruct step-by-step
	b)	to be easy to follow
2. **Tone**		The author writes as if she/he were the instructor.
3. **Structures used**	a)	verbs giving commands—*put, turn, stir, measure*
	b)	most verbs in the present tense
	c)	not many adjectives
	d)	some maths for measuring
	e)	headings, pictures, graphs, diagrams, charts, maps
4. **How it is written**	a)	simple, short, practical statements
	b)	statements in order, often numbered
5. **Examples**		directions, recipes, work routines, signs, notices, labels

Form 9: A Guide to the Four Different Writing Styles (cont'd)

Writing for Knowledge		
1. **Purpose**	a)	to inform by writing facts about a subject
	b)	to educate people in different areas of knowledge—history, geography, science
2. **Tone**		The author writes as if he/she were an expert on the subject.
3. **Structures used**	a)	mostly in the present tense
	b)	not many adjectives
4. **How it is written**	a)	logical
	b)	no opinions given or emotions shown
	c)	lots of information packed into the writing
5. **Examples**		encyclopaedias, non-fiction books, text books etc.
Writing for Public Debate		
1. **Purpose**	a)	to take a position on an issue of public concern
	b)	to give reasons why this position is thought to be correct
2. **Tone**		The author writes to persuade the reader to agree with her/him
3. **Structures used**	a)	verbs like *must, should*
	b)	mostly in the present tense
	c)	phrases like—*on the other hand, another reason, because, so*
	d)	doesn't use *I, me, my*—is impersonal
4. **How it is written**	a)	may refer to an expert or statistics to back up an argument
	b)	may seem to be balanced, but has one point of view to push
	c)	may include the opposite point of view so the author can show why he/she does not agree with it.
5. **Examples**		letters to the editor, essays for educational courses and debates

Writing in the four different styles

Form 10 helps students to clarify the distinguishing characteristics of each style and provides models to follow in their own writing.

Form 10: One Topic Written in the Four Different Styles

One Topic Written in the Four Different Styles

1. Writing for Self Expression

I am a tea drinker. I drink about ten cups a day.

My favourite type is Twinings Earl Grey. I buy it in a large packet of five hundred tea bags, which lasts me about two months. Then I go back to ordinary tea until I save up enough money to buy some more Earl Grey. I usually add milk but no sugar.

I have two favourite mugs. My daughters gave them to me for Christmas. One says, 'I love you, Mom' and the other is called Aunt Em from the Wizard of Oz.

When I look at the brown stains left in the cup, I imagine my teeth going browner and browner with each drink of tea.

Sometimes I think I should stop drinking tea, but I don't think I will. I enjoy a good cup of tea.

2. Writing for Practical Purposes

How to make a cup of tea

1. Fill the electric jug with cold tap water and then plug it into the electric socket and turn it on.
2. When the jug boils, pour some hot water into a pottery or china pot to warm it up. Let it sit for a minute. Then empty the pot.
3. Put 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of loose tea for each person into the pot and pour in just enough boiling water to cover the tea leaves completely.
4. Put a tea cozy over the pot.
5. Let it stand 3 minutes. Any longer and the tea will taste bitter.
6. Take the lid off the pot and fill the pot with boiling water.
7. Pour milk into the cup (about 1 tablespoon).
8. Strain the tea into the cup.
9. Add sugar if you wish. Stir the tea.
10. Now the cup of tea is ready to drink.

Form 10: Continued

3. Writing for Knowledge

The Production of Tea

Tea is a drink made from the leaves of a small tree. Its scientific name is Camellia sinenis. The plants are usually grown on mountain tops in warm countries, like Indonesia, Sri Lanka, China or India. The plants do best with lots of rain. Darjeeling, in India, produces high quality tea. The plants mature when they are about six years old and they may live to over fifty years.

During the growing season, the leaves are picked by hand once a week. The picker usually takes the bud and two top leaves from the end of each shoot. For some teas the bud and three leaves are taken, giving more tea but poorer quality. Trees are regularly cut into a low bush shape to get more leaves to grow.

After the leaves are picked, they must be quickly processed. Most tea estates have their own factory where the leaves are fermented, dried, sifted, sorted and packaged. The tea leaves are broken up and change from green to black. The drying houses have two storeys. The tea is spread on the wooden upper floor. A wood stove burns on the ground floor. The heat rises to the upper floor and dries out the tea leaves. Workers in the drying houses wear white clothes including white cloth slippers because everything must be kept clean. Once the leaves are dried they are sorted by size and graded into different qualities. The workers sweep the floors of the drying houses with big brooms. The tea dust swept up is packed and sold as the cheapest tea. Tea is usually shipped in large wooden chests lined with aluminium foil. The production methods used today haven't changed in hundreds of years.

China is the greatest producer of tea, and it uses most of the tea it grows. The largest importers of tea are England, Australia and Russia.

Reference: *The Oxford Book of Food Plants*, by B.E. Nicholson, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969.

4. Writing for Public Debate: stating two sides of an issue

Tea drinking is harmful to your health

People who drink large amounts of tea are damaging their health.

Tea contains many chemicals which are dangerous to human health when taken in large quantities. The two most important are caffeine and tannin. Caffeine is an addictive drug. People who are addicted become dependent on caffeine. They become quite nervous if they miss their cup of tea. To overcome this dependence, they must go without tea or other caffeine products for a period of two weeks. During this time, they may feel minor withdrawal effects like nervousness and shaking. But once this period is over, the body will be rid of caffeine.

Another dangerous effect of tea drinking is that it acts as a diuretic. This means the body loses too much fluid and can become dehydrated if tea is the main fluid drunk. Water should be drunk to overcome this effect.

Because there is no food value in tea, other than the milk and sugar added, there is no nutritional reason to drink tea.

On the other hand, the bad effects of drinking small quantities of tea are minimal, and are far out-weighed by the social pleasures of sharing a cup of tea with friends. For some people, the calming effect of tea drinking is quite relaxing.

Each person must decide for themselves if they will drink tea or not and the amounts they will take. But it is important to remember that the negative side-effects of enjoying that nice cup of tea are very real.

Form 11: Examples of Student Topics

Form 11 shows the range of topics chosen by a group of Level 1 students in a Migrant English class, based on their interests and their prior learning.

Betty: Australia		
a.	Narrative	Why I call Australia my home.
b.	Instructions	How to become a naturalised Australian citizen.
c.	Factual Information	Some facts about Australia.
d.	Argument	Australia is the best place to live. Some bad things about living in Australia.
Anna: Humans		
a.	Narrative	What I think it means to be human.
b.	Instructions	How to train a person.
c.	Factual Information	Facts about the human race.
d.	Argument	Without proper training a person is an Animal. With proper training people become humane.
Steve: Hunting		
a.	Narrative	Why I enjoy hunting.
b.	Instructions	How to clean a gun.
c.	Factual Information	Rabbit hunting in Australia.
d.	Argumentative	People have a right to own a gun. People shouldn't own guns.
Elli: Excursions		
a.	Narrative	Why I love excursions.
b.	Instructions	How to get to Geelong.
c.	Factual Information	Pick a place you enjoyed visiting and describe.
d.	Argumentative	Travelling in a group is best. Travelling alone is best.
Jim: Learning English		
a.	Narrative	Why it is important to me to improve my English.
b.	Instructions	Steps to improve your English.
c.	Factual Information	The English Language.
d.	Argumentative	It is better to speak English in Australia. It is better to speak Greek in Australia.

Anne: Prince Charles and Lady Diana		
a.	Narrative	Why I am interested in Prince Charles and Lady Diana, or, Why I like Prince Charles and Lady Diana.
b.	Instructions	How to get to Buckingham Palace.
c.	Factual Information	Facts about Prince Charles.
d.	Argumentative	It is good for a country to have a royal family Royal families are bad for a country.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on the competencies of the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Framework crystallised in the Summary of Reading and Writing Competencies (Stream 1) and the Summary of Oral Competencies (Stream 2) (*CGE for Adults*, pp. 18, 60). These tabulations exist not to compartmentalise the curriculum into separate entities represented by separate little boxes, but to emphasise the *connections* between the boxes. The Stream 1 and 2 Summaries of VAELLNAF create the structure within which flexible, complex interactions can take place—in a form which can be reported on and evaluated, without the teacher losing sight of the overall holistic aim of adult literacy teaching. The driving force for curriculum content must still be meeting student needs as directly as possible. Because of its flexible structure, VAELLNAF provides a welcome format within which this objective can be achieved. It is important to keep making the connections.

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Curriculum at work

Four Literacies in a workplace class

Kaye Elias

This article documents a curriculum developed for a language and literacy class for workers at a local metropolitan Council. It first describes the students and the process of negotiating the curriculum with the various stakeholders in the workplace. It then describes briefly the course as a whole. Finally it looks at three sessions in more detail and shows how they can be mapped onto the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF).

The context

The class was set up by the Workplace Basic Education Department at the Council of Adult Education. Due to a range of learning levels and a mix of students from English as a Second Language (ESL) backgrounds and students from an English-Speaking Background (ESB), the course was taught by two teachers in a team-teaching situation. This allowed a variety of small group learning approaches, divided in different ways, and at different times according to department, English language need or skill level. It also allowed for more individual attention.

The participants attended the course held at the workplace during work time for three hours per week for thirty weeks. The class was made up of participants from two departments at a local municipal council. These were workers from the Cleansing Department who operated cleaning trucks and carried out general street cleaning and rubbish removal duties, and workers from the Home Care Department who home visited the elderly and the housebound to clean and provide support.

Varied student backgrounds and skills

Two students came from an English speaking background and the other students were Greek, South American, Czechoslovakian, Mauritian or Yugoslav. The time these workers have been in Australia ranged from two years to twenty-seven years. The number of years they had been in Australia was not necessarily reflected in their language and literacy competence. The worker who had most recently arrived in Australia had well-developed reading and writing skills compared with other ESL students in the course. His education in Czechoslovakia included a trade qualification and he had studied some English while at school. Thus he approached the acquisition of English skills in a very different way from the two workers who came with limited schooling from Greece twenty-seven years ago. He asked questions on the finer points of grammar, checked word definitions for shades of meaning, requested new words be put in a sentence for fuller understanding and wrote a page in no time at all. On the other hand, the two Greek workers were concerned with gaining writing confidence, getting a few sentences down on paper, spelling and simple grammar constructions.

At the start of the course, the reading and writing levels of the students ranged from Reading and Writing developing Level 1 to beyond Level 4. The Czechoslovakian worker mentioned above was able to express very complex ideas in writing but needed assistance with sentence construction in English and vocabulary extension. Hence the course had to allow all students the opportunity to perform at a level appropriate to their particular stage of learning.

Negotiating the curriculum

Addressing the needs of all parties

The final curriculum took time to develop because it had to take into account the needs of a number of parties. These were the workplace as a whole, the two departments from which the workers came and the workers themselves. It was also a curriculum developed for this particular workplace, for a particular period in time in that workplace and for the individual students involved.

Workplace input

This particular course was initiated through the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee at the workplace. At a planning meeting before the course started the two departments, Cleansing and Home Care, identified different outcomes for the course. The Cleansing Department wanted workers to be able to participate more fully in the workplace in a general way. Limited experience in English had often hampered the supervisor's easy communication with workers. On the other hand, the Home Care Department had more specific outcomes in mind and passed on a list of tasks home care workers needed to perform in their jobs, such as being able to read a roster, take down a phone message, fill in forms etc. Both these objectives were taken into account in planning the course. Both departments passed on forms and other material used at the work site.

Before the course started Leah Adler, my team-teacher, and I visited the class venue, the Home Care Office and the outdoor staff Depot. The workplace visit was a general one to see the workers' work environment. The Home Care workers, whose work is carried out away from the Home Care Office reported to their supervisors at the Office once a week, while the Cleansing workers started and finished at the Depot each day. Midway through the course we returned to the two sites to gather material and more information about specific reading, writing and oral communication demands of the workers' jobs.

Student input

It took time to get to know the students, for them to get a 'feel' for the way the class worked and realise that their input into curriculum was valued. Students were encouraged to think about what they needed to learn and how the course could assist them.

The student interview forms showed the two ESB students could fill out simple forms, didn't read much and wanted to practise and improve reading and writing, understand what they read, improve spelling and learn new words, punctuation and grammar. The ESL students' needs varied. One student remarked about her speaking and listening skills, 'I understand but I don't participate', and virtually did no writing. Another wanted to be able to write phone messages accurately for clients.

One student who could only write a few unrelated words in capitals said, 'I want to be able to do all my own writing, fill up forms by myself not asking my kids'. Another had very limited reading, didn't write much, only filled out simple forms and got others to do any writing needed at work. Another was happy with his reading but said his writing had got worse because he didn't practise and said he wanted to learn to write, to practise and get confidence. One wanted to go for a higher driving licence, gain higher qualifications and wanted to improve 'speaking, listening, understanding and everything needed to improve'.

At several times during the course the group took stock of what had been covered in the course and made suggestions about future content. At these times we brainstormed the work done so far and brainstormed possible future content. Leah and I also gave input here by offering possible options as well as presenting curriculum ideas we thought should be included.

Individual written evaluations to encourage students to reflect on their learning and to assist us in planning were also completed at these times.

At different times during the course evaluation questions included:

- What do you want to get out of this course?
- How are you going in the course?
- What activities have helped you most?
- Name one thing you have learnt or are better at now.
- Are you reading and writing more now?
- Has anyone at work or at home noticed any change?
- What do you want to do more of in the course?
- Name three activities that have benefited you most.
- Have you noticed any improvements in your reading and writing? What?
- Name three things you would like to do or learn in the course.
- Are there any changes or suggestions you would like to make?

To help plan for the work-focused activities we used a similar technique. The class divided into two groups according to department to talk about their jobs and brainstorm all the possible reading and writing done at work.

Students then individually completed a questionnaire entitled 'Reading and Writing at Work'. The questions were:

- What signs and notices do you need to read?
- What other reading do you need to do, e.g. information booklets, instructions, memos, minutes of meetings, reports, forms, messages.
- What writing do you need to do in your job, e.g. forms, rosters, notes, shopping lists, reports.
- What do you need to learn to be able to do this reading and writing?

As well as the written evaluation, students' occasional verbal comments were taken into account in planning the course. For example the non-English speaking background students commented they wanted more 'speaking', the English-speaking background students said they wanted more 'spelling'. Oral communication skills and development was integrated into most activities.

Tutor input

The early sessions used a variety of stimulus material to begin developing basic skills, for example, writing skills, that could be put into practice later on in the course using workplace texts. With a course like this one, that is 30 weeks long, it was possible to combine a general curriculum as well as one which used specific workplace content.

There are all sorts of lists tutors have in mind in planning curriculum. There are skills lists, for example, a reading skills list like skimming, scanning, reading for general meaning, for particular ideas ... There is a list of genres like recount, narrative, instructions, etc. There is a list of content or areas of knowledge that inform like local information, history, current affairs etc. There is the list of basic everyday tasks such as finding information, filling in forms, giving directions, taking down a message, and so on.

The course that developed attempted to incorporate all these sorts of things and to develop reading, writing and oral communication skills through material that related both directly to work as well as areas of interest that did not directly relate to work. However the skills used in non-work-related activities are skills that can be used at work too. For example, some reading activities in the course practised scanning, skimming skills and close reading for understanding ideas.

Scanning practice was gained through activities with the real estate section of the newspaper and an entertainment guide. Scanning is a skill that can be used with any material at work or outside work where this type of reading is appropriate. Skimming was practised using Council newsletters and local papers.

Reading for understanding ideas was done through reading daily newspaper articles as well as work documents. These same newspaper articles were also used to prompt lively discussion and an opportunity to express ideas and opinions as well as an opportunity to listen and respond to the opinions of others.

Local resources

The curriculum also drew upon the resources available in the local setting. It was possible to use an Historic Photographic Exhibition because it was nearby, and likewise the Library which was close.

Hence the curriculum content for this course covered a rich range of topics from the students' work, the local area, current public debates and students' interests. Reading, writing and oral communication activities were integrated and developed around these topics.

The curriculum and the four literacy domains

In general I found the four literacy domains in the Reading and Writing streams of the Accreditation Framework useful in framing the curriculum. Reference to the domains ensures a mix of genres and text types and helps in planning a comprehensive curriculum.

Sometimes it can be difficult to decide under which domain different texts should be placed. Below you will notice I have included a complaint letter under Literacy for Practical Purposes. However I acknowledge the presence of the other three literacies as well. A complaint letter has a set format, paragraphs that have set purposes and a set order, key words and phrases that need to be mastered, and it initiates an action. These are some of the features of Literacy for Practical Purposes.

But a complaint letter may also contain information (Literacy for Knowledge), an argument or opinion (Literacy for Public Debate), and a recount (Literacy for Self Expression). However because a complaint letter is intended for a practical purpose, I have decided to place it in Literacy for Practical Purposes. Others might place it in Literacy for Public Debate because it argues a certain point.

On the other hand I have included messages for the Home Care Department message book under Literacy for Self Expression. I recognise that messages are used for very practical purposes but because these messages predominantly use the genre of personal recount I made a decision to include it under the domain of Literacy for Self Expression. I could also be persuaded to include it under Literacy for Practical Purposes instead.

Text as locus of more than one literacy

The *CGE for Adults* acknowledges the need to recognise the existence of distinctive 'literacies' which it says equip adults for the civic, socio-cultural and job-related demands that our society places on its citizens. It notes that each 'literacy' has its own distinctive social purpose and social outcomes and that competence in one does not ensure competence in any of the others. It also recognises the possible existence of more than one literacy in any text.

Thus it can be argued in any course, wherever it takes place, that it is necessary to explicitly teach all four literacies, though not necessarily in equal measure, so adults are prepared to handle any reading and writing task competently. The complaint letter mentioned above is a good example of this overlapping and incorporation of aspects of different 'literacies' in the one task.

The course documented here incorporates each of the four domains and attempts to integrate speaking, listening, reading and writing for meaningful purposes. As there was a range of ability levels in the group, student writing performance ranged from Level 1 to Level 4. While the range of reading material was the same for all students, the level of support and expected performance varied according to student reading levels.

The curriculum delineated by domains

Literacy for Self Expression

Our First Session
- create whole group text
- copy

A Place I have visited in Victoria
- discuss, record vocab (small groups)
- write personal recount

Personal Letters
- read two model letters, note format, key words and phrases
- complete exercise using 'opening sentences'
- write own letter from list of situations presented

Personal Stories
- write personal narratives, recounts of events
- write accounts of present and previous jobs

Article about being a teenager again
- read, discuss own ideas
- write own view

Message Book (Home Care Dept)
- discuss purpose, importance, content
- write typical messages

In-House Newsletter Contributions (Cleansing Dept)
- write for Council staff newsletter

Literacy for Practical Purposes

Melbourne Day Tour Map
- scan, locate specific information, complete question sheet (pairs)

Real Estate Column
- find information, answer questions on worksheet (pairs or individuals)

Forms
- Annual Leave Application
- Staff Training Attendance Form
- Staff Training Evaluation Form (Home Care)
- Injury Form (Cleansing)
- Home Care Time Sheet (Home Care)
- Sick Leave Application

- note format, read, discuss, complete forms

Local Library Visits
- read library information before visit
- visits, tour by librarian, use of catalogue, browse, join, borrow

Melbourne Holiday Activities Guide (Local Paper)
- scan, use question sheet to find specific information (pairs or individuals)

Complaint Letters

formal
- read model letter
- discuss format, key words and phrases, purpose of each paragraph
- write own using model with first line of each paragraph given

less formal
- read model, discuss (two groups)
- groups compose follow up letter (two groups)

Short Letters (confirming, cancelling, asking for information)
- write short letters for scenarios on worksheet
- complete exercise, match letter openers and endings

Job Application Letter
- read model, discuss format, words, phrases, purpose of each paragraph
- read job vacancies from employment section of newspaper
- write own letter using model with first line of each paragraph given

Resumé
- read model, discuss content
- write own, structure given, fill in individual details

Employee Health and Recreation Program Pamphlet
- scan, use question sheet to locate specific information

Messages

Telephone Messages
- read model, note features, discuss essential information
- listen to taped messages ('What's My Line'), fill in missing information
- listen to tapes, take fuller messages, put in message pad format

- role-play phone conversations, use situations on cards (ESL workers), record on tape, replay

Other Messages
- write appropriate messages from list of typical situations at work

Memos
- read memos, note format, content, discuss purpose (Cleansing Dept)

Yellow Pages
scan to locate specific information as listed on worksheet

Giving Directions
- use area map, specific vocabulary for giving directions & location (pairs)
- worksheet, write correct statements about area map
- practise giving directions using local map (pairs)

Instructions–Recipes
- read models, note verbs, format, style
- write own favourite recipe

Other (ESB workers)
- read Home Care task sheet
- write shopping list

Literacy for Public Debate

Article on the image of 'Aussies'
- read (two groups)
- discuss ideas (whole group)
- write own response on topic 'The Aussie Image–Does it really exist?'

State Elections
Interviewing the leaders of the political parties contesting the election
- make up questions, make up answers (pairs)
- role-play an interview with one of the above
- write own response 'Reaction to the result' of the election

Newspaper article about the Premier of Victoria
- read, extract ideas, vocab

What is your opinion? topic cards
- give own opinion about the outcome of the election (small groups)

Federal Election
Newspaper article about the campaign issues
- read to establish writer's position, note use of emotive words
- give individual comment and discuss election using 'issue cards'

Literacy for Knowledge

Article about historic landmarks
- read (pairs), discuss, record vocab. (two groups)

Town Hall Newsletter for Residents
- skim, read one article in detail (two groups)

Photographic Exhibition: *Historic Images 1861–1957*
- view, discuss
- Group 1: compose group writing using a language experience approach, copy
- Group 2: take notes, write individual reports

Articles on Local Buildings (from vertical file, local Library)
- choose article, use guiding notes, predict content, read, discuss (groups of three)
- write four pieces of information, compose group writing, use butchers' paper (groups of three)
- complete follow-up reading activities using group writing—cloze, incorrect statements

Video on City Council Services
- take notes
- write short report

Library Research
- decide topic, locate section in library, choose reference, scan
- list questions about topic, read for detail
- make notes, write short report

Other activities relating to all domains

- Vocabulary lists
- Synonyms, antonyms—prepared exercises
- Revising skills—own writing
- Spelling practice
- Pronunciation
- Dictionary use
- Prepositions
- Apostrophe—common contractions
- Tense
- Colloquialisms
- Idioms

The Message Book

Two-thirds of the way through the course, a unit of work on the Message Book was developed for students from the Home Care Department. This unit of work was a response to changes occurring in the workplace at the time.

From speech to writing

Due to efficiency measures and budget cutbacks, the duties of Home Care workers were undergoing quite a dramatic change. New ways of communicating between workers and supervisors were being introduced. Previously, Home Care workers did their weekly 'report in' by meeting with their supervisor to report on clients and do the necessary paper work. This system was extremely time-consuming for supervisors and could not be maintained with new budget restrictions.

So, Home Care workers were now required to fill out their own leave forms, a new more comprehensive time sheet and give feedback to their supervisor via a message book. Each worker was given ta separate page in an exercise book on which to report back. Thus, what had previously been communicated verbally in a one-to-one situation, was now to be communicated in writing.

Finding models

These changes in the Home Care Department were introduced half way through the course and so were able to be incorporated into the curriculum. The Manager of the Section alerted the tutors to these changes during a regular planning group meeting. Leah and I then followed this up with a visit to the Home Care Section to talk with the Manager and collect material. On this, our second visit, we talked with the Home Care Manager to find out more about the changes in reporting. We looked at the message book, collected new time sheets and notices from the noticeboard. At the time of this visit only one worker in the class was writing in the message book.

What follows here shows in more detail three sessions that addressed these changes to the work of Home Care workers. In these three sessions the whole group worked together for the first half of the session, then after the tea break divided into departments for specific department work. While I worked on the message book with Home Care workers, Leah worked with the cleansing workers covering an injury form, a memo and a reading exercise using the Yellow Pages.

A final word

The use of the four literacy domains in planning and documenting curriculum has been most helpful to me. Using the four domains focuses attention on different text types. It has helped me think more clearly about texts, their features and their specific purposes. It has allowed me to better differentiate between texts than I did before and has introduced me to systemic linguistics. I think the use of the four literacy domains has provided a very useful structure for the teaching of literacy and has expanded curriculum possibilities and options for the literacy classroom.

The Message Book: a close-up of three sessions

Plan	**Outcome**	**Relationship to VAELLNAF**
Session 1		
Text 1: ***New Time Sheet*** *Activity 1–Note features* Note column format, headings, parts to be filled in etc.		Reading for Practical Purposes, Level 1
Activity 2–Fill in new time sheet	Everyone filled in a time sheet, checking with me and each other till everyone was satisfied it was complete.	Writing for Practical Purposes, Levels 1-2
Text 2: ***Message Book*** *Activity 1–Establishing Context* Questions on whiteboard to guide discussion. 'What is it for?' 'Why was it introduced?' 'Is it important?' 'Why?' 'How often is it used?' 'When is it used?' 'Who uses it?'	Information given by students about the message book included: it is an exercise book, it is used every Wednesday, it is a communication between supervisor and roster person, it is important because it is now the major link between worker and supervisor etc.	Oracy for Practical Purposes, Levels 2-3
Activity 2–Defining Content Brainstorm what supervisors and workers might write about and a way of describing that writing.	The group verbally gave examples of messages and we classified them as events, happenings, information, news, feedback, comments, answers, questions.	
Activity 3–Note Difficulties Discussion: How is it working? What are the difficulties if any?	Problems with the message book at work were: handwriting styles, small handwriting, abbreviations, big words.	
Activity 4–Writing as a Supervisor Task: 'You are a supervisor: write three messages to a worker in the message book.'	I collected these to know the typical content of messages and identify common grammar and spelling errors made by the students in order to plan next activities. All client names and content of messages would be altered.	Writing for Self Expression or Practical Purposes, Levels 1-2
Homework Write in message book at work and report back the following week.		

The Message Book: continued

Plan	Outcome	Relationship to VAELLNAF
Session 2		
Activity 1–Report back Each student reports on message left in the work book.	Everyone had put a message in the book and most brought in a written copy of their message. Collect to plan next worksheet.	
Activity 2–Group Correction Put some messages on whiteboard to illustrate common errors in tense and grammar. Correct them together and discuss errors.	Examples covered: • use of '*he's/his*', '*she cooks/they cook*' • word endings—*ed, ing, ly*', '*to/too*', '*I have/I've*', '*it is'/'it's'* • prepositions.	
Activity 3–Message Book Worksheet The worksheet is modelled on the message book. It includes supervisor's comments with a space underneath for worker's response. Students complete worksheet. Students read out responses to group.	Messages written by students were able to be understood. Errors included typical ESL grammar problems & spelling.	Writing for Self Expression or Practical Purposes, Levels 1-2
Session 3		
Activity 1–Incorrect Sentences Worksheet Sentences were messages similar to those used by students in previous week's worksheet. Each sentence contained one common error such as no preposition, no agreement of noun and verb. Students correct sentences on worksheet.	Some students worked alone, others worked in pairs. After completion we identified the mistakes and talked about the reason for the change, e.g. '*finished* because it is in the past'.	Writing for Practical Purposes, Levels 1-2
Activity 2–Spelling practice Incorrectly spelt words are taken from message book activities done so far & put on blank spelling practice sheets. A different list compiled for each student. Days of the week and months also practised. Each student practises own spelling on 'look, cover, write, check' spelling sheet.		

Workplace education

Which Literacies?

Jude Newcombe

Full participation in the workplace makes special demands on the language skills of any worker—in talking, in reading and in writing. Some texts such as memos, occupational health and safety warnings and incident reports are usually found only at work. The four literacies of the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework are all relevant in our working lives. This case study describes a course for which course content was negotiated with students. During this process, the primary focus which emerged was on Literacy as Procedure and Literacy as Public Debate.

Literacies in the workplace

According to Rob McCormack in his background chapter 'Different Angles: Thinking through the Four Literacies', work life focuses on getting things done. This echoes the research of people such as Mikulecky (1990, pp.7–20) who found that the two forms of literacy needed at work were 'literacy to do' and 'literacy to know'.

However, while there is no question that Literacy as Procedure is part of the repertoire that most people use to perform their work, we are in danger of selling our students short if we fail to recognise the place of the three other literacies in our working lives.

- Firstly, Literacy as Knowledge is necessary if training and retraining are to be broad-based. Introduction to the underlying principles as to why a product is manufactured in a particular way is more likely to result in a flexible and innovative workforce.
- Similarly, teaching Literacy as Public Debate is a recognition that workplaces are themselves the site of very important debates such as how to effectively restructure work organisation. While there is not always agreement about who should be involved in debate in the workplace, the ability to follow argument and articulate ideas constructively enables people at work to participate effectively in decision-making processes.
- Finally, Literacy as Self Expression can contribute to a sense of self-worth and encourages reflection on cultural and personal issues. Effective communication in a multi-ethnic workforce such as we have in Australia is dependent upon sensitivity to cross-cultural issues as well as the acquisition of speaking and listening skills in English.

Each of the four literacies is therefore important in the workplace. All the same, teachers cannot perform miracles. Given the other demands and constraints on workplace classes it is unrealistic to attempt to pursue all four literacies in 40–90 hours. However the flexibility of the comprehensive literacy model means that the interconnections can always be made; there can be a primary focus on one or two of the literacies but a few doors into the other literacies can be opened at the same time.

In the course I am writing about in this case study, a primary focus on Literacy as Procedure and Literacy as Public Debate developed out of ongoing negotiations with the students. The class was 'Writing and Communication Skills' in the Public Transport Corporation (PTC). I was employed by the Workplace Basic Education (WBE) Department of the Council of Adult Education (CAE). The class was negotiated for thirty Wednesdays from 8.30–11.30 am. Changes taking place in the PTC profoundly affected the class in a number of ways as described later. This undoubtedly made it more difficult to explore the four literacies in ways I would have liked.

In this article I begin with a brief explanation of the role of the workplace planning group in curriculum development, a description of the class participants and the changing context in which we worked. I outline the process I used in the negotiation of the curriculum, how the model of the four literacies was integrated into the negotiation process and how opportunities to pursue curriculum around the four literacies were limited if I was to respond to what some students saw as their most pressing need—passing the clerical test. A short overview of the course follows. I then focus in some detail on the interweaving strands of Literacy as Procedure and Literacy as Public Debate.

Negotiating the curriculum

The Planning Group and the curriculum

Classes conducted by the WBE Department are described as having a negotiated curriculum, in which the Planning Group has a major role. The Department's publicity material explains that there is no set curriculum, no package of adult basic education but that each course is tailored to meet the needs of the class participants and the organisation.

Fieldworkers from WBE establish a Planning Group in each workplace consisting of employer and union representatives. Through this forum and through direct discussion, the representatives are able to have input into the curriculum. The Planning Group also has a major role in evaluating whether the course has met the workplace's expectations—and whether the educational provider will be invited back next year.

The class in the PTC was part of a project funded by the Transport and Storage Industry Training Board (ITB). It was overseen by a Steering Committee composed of representatives from the Transport ITB, the Equal Opportunity Unit of the PTC, the Australian Railways Union and a WBE field worker and project officer.

The students

For the first ten weeks the class was composed of seven employees—a tram inspector, a workshop labourer, an assistant station master, a plant operator who had worked in stores and two people in clerical positions. They travelled from all corners of Melbourne to get to class. Although they had much to share in all having the same employer, none of them had ever worked together. In getting to know each other, they also learned a great deal about how others work in the PTC.

The people in the group had very different educational backgrounds. They also wanted different things from the class:

- Maria had been to university in the Philippines and, since her arrival in Australia five years before, had attended English on the Job and TAFE courses. She was anxious to improve her pronunciation and grammar and was keen to write work-related material.
- Tony had lived in Australia for more than twenty years. He had trained as an accountant in Egypt. He had been to English on the Job classes. He wanted to improve his spoken and written English and needed to pass the clerical test.
- Margaret had come from Malta when she was eleven years old and had a few years schooling in Australia. Her spoken English was fluent and expressive. For several months she had been attending a daytime class for beginning writers.
- Michael had been educated at secondary school in Greece and had come to Australia during his adolescence. He spoke English fluently and had taught himself to write in English. His primary aim in coming to class was to pass the clerical test.
- David had passed Year 11 English at school but because of poor spelling and his own perception of himself as a bad writer, he was unable to do any work-related writing. This blocked his promotion.
- Paul had completed some years of high school in Australia. The scope and complexity of his writing needed development. He wanted to pass the clerical test.
- Bill had left school at fifteen but had attended evening classes many years before and passed TOP (Tertiary Orientation Program) English. He also needed to pass the clerical test.

Context and constraints

The class began just after the change in State government, a period of enormous uncertainty and upheaval in the PTC. As a result of expenditure cutbacks, we changed rooms seven times in three different buildings in inner Melbourne within the first thirteen weeks of the course. We eventually settled into a reasonably comfortable room where the main drawback was a large uncovered plate glass window which looked directly onto the foyer of Transport House. Such a public position reinforced the anxiety of the participants.

Uncertainty and change adversely affected time release. Class participants swung between demoralisation and guilt about attending class (leaving workmates to cover for them, leaving a railway station unattended), determination to hold the class together and anxiety that if they could leave their job for a morning someone might think that their job was unnecessary. We were unsure whether the class would reconvene after the Christmas break. Shortly after it did, the two women in the class were redeployed and were unable to take time release. One of the men went on night shift and maintained involvement in the class through correspondence. New students entered the class halfway through.

Framing the curriculum

In the first two weeks of the course, through individual and group work and class discussion, we produced a list of what students said they wanted from the class.

Writing we want to do	**Things we want to improve**
Reports:	
Incident, Accident,	Spelling
Safety, Special Day Report	Vocabulary
Memos	Reading: Stories, PTC By-laws
Letters	Punctuation
Forms	Grammar
Job Applications	Handwriting
Stories	Past tense
Clerical Aptitude Test	
Matters for Attention	

A few days afterwards I was required to prepare a report for the Steering Committee showing proposals for the course content for my class and the 'Everyday Reading and Writing' class. I began by mapping out what the students had said they wanted across a grid of the four literacies and I added broad areas of reading and writing topics across the four literacies. The grid below is an extract from the Interim Report to the Steering Committee:

Proposed course content	
Literacy for Self Expression	**Literacy for Practical Purposes**
Reading	Reading
• **Autobiographies** e.g. Kath Walker, Mike Williamson • **Short stories** e.g. Frank Tillsley, Darcy Niland, Malamo Iatrou	PTC By-laws Instructions Reports
Writing	Writing
• **Personal recounting:** Travelling to Work, The Journey, A Day at Work • **Narrative**	• **Reports:** Accident, Incident, Discrepancy, Safety • Messages, Matters for Attention • **Memos** • **Letters** • **Job Applications**

Literacy for Knowledge	Literacy for Public Debate
Reading	Reading
• By-laws e.g. PTC • Factual information on Health & Safety • Research reports	• Newspaper articles
Writing	Writing
• Research on a topic chosen by the student • Explanation of a process showing cause and effect	• Writing an opinion (as a group and as individuals) • Developing an argument for debate

Skills

The report also included a long list of 'skills' that would be taught, for example, predicting, guessing the meaning of unknown words, skimming and scanning, drafting and editing. The Steering Committee endorsed the proposal, understanding that changes would be made as the course progressed.

Both the grid and the list of 'skills' went far beyond what students said they wanted. But then, negotiation of the curriculum has never meant doing just what students say they need and teachers have never gone empty-handed to the negotiation process. To a large extent, students have trusted our professionalism to take them in the right direction. Because the report had to be done so quickly, the class discussion of the proposed course content occurred after the report had gone to the Steering Committee. However, the process of mapping out across the four literacies meant that I had to clarify my plans for the class and present them in written form. As the weeks went by, we added bits and trimmed off what was unrealistic or not needed. In this sense, the Accreditation Framework assisted the process of negotiation of the curriculum.

Overview of the course

In the early weeks of the course we read autobiographical accounts and some fiction around the theme of a journey. There was always a great deal of enthusiasm in the discussion. Malamo Iatrou's 'Strange Country' (ed. Disher, 1987) provoked discussion about cross-cultural misunderstanding and how things have or have not changed for migrants to Australia. People wrote their own story about a journey—these varied greatly. Margaret's journey was organising the family, dropping the kids off at childcare and then getting herself to work each morning; David wrote about a car accident; Tony wrote a poetic piece about his journey back to Egypt. Some people wrote a few paragraphs over a number of weeks; others wrote pages. Everyone worked through drafts, editing and self-correcting.

Shortly afterwards we spent a session looking at how to fill in the *'Lost, Mislaid and Mutilated Ticket'* form. We discussed the purpose of the form, the contexts in which it might be used and what the language on the form meant. Subsequently Maria and Tony spent time compiling a list of the questions they might need to ask if a customer could not fill the form in themselves.

Over the next few weeks, everyone wrote up resumés. We worked intensively on spelling and vocabulary. We watched a video on the history of the English language. We read and discussed newspaper articles, including one on the elections in the USA which left us with a number of unanswered questions. On weekends, class members went to their local library to research the US or Australian system of government and reported back their findings to the class.

Preparing for the PTC clerical test

During Week 9 of the course, students completed written evaluation sheets in which it emerged that three of them wanted to give priority to preparing for the PTC clerical test. The 'clerical test' consists of four multiple choice tests in spelling, word knowledge, maths and checking. Employees have to pass the test to be promoted or reclassified. There was a certain urgency about this request, as pay increases and job security were involved. From Week 10 onwards, three students spent an hour of class time working through practice sheets, timing themselves and correcting and discussing the answers usually without intervention from me. They learnt a lot about 'working with others and working in teams', including setting common goals, deciding on the allocation of tasks as described in the Mayer Key Competencies (*CGE for Adults*, p.97). They gave each other enormous support as they went, one by one like lambs to the slaughter, to do the real test.

As each of them passed the test, I welcomed them back to the reading and writing which I felt would bring progress in their literacy development. Passing the clerical test was their priority; teaching reading and writing was mine.

Working in groups

Because of the wide range of needs in the group and because the clerical test group began working separately from Week 10, people in the class often worked in pairs or groups of three doing quite different work from the rest of the class. These sub-groups allowed people who had missed class time to catch up while others had the opportunity to focus on particular areas. On a number of occasions I used the 'Read and Retell' process outlined by Brown and Cambourne (1988). On one occasion Maria and David worked together on a short passage from *The Songlines* (Chatwin, 1988), but while she focused on the use of past tense and sentence structure in recreating the text, he was intent on sequencing, paragraphing and spelling.

Developing skills

As it was being used on this occasion, this activity developed skills described in Element 3.1: Writing for Self Expression (*CGE for Adults*, p. 40). Both students were learning to 'Combine 3 or more external ideas and experiences' (1); and to 'Connect assessment views and experiences, the action and/or characters to more general ideas' (3); and to 'Focus on the topic' (5). Maria was struggling to 'Use standard grammar with considerable accuracy' (7); and David was concerned to 'Spell with considerable accuracy' (6); and to 'Sequence several paragraphs coherently' (4). However, in the discussion following a comparison of how differently they had retold the story, they became more aware of the range of values and perspectives possible and developed appreciation of the use of 'literacy devices and descriptions of character and atmosphere to locate people and events in time and space, to convey feeling and infer attitudes'—Element 4.1: Writing for Self Expression, Performance Criteria 2 and 3 (*CGE for Adults*, p. 50). We used this 'Read and Retell' process with other narrative texts such as with texts that developed argument.

The threads of Literacy for Public Debate and Literacy for Practical Purposes which I describe below ran through the remainder of the course. We also dealt with types of workplace material such as Incident Reports and Special Day Reports which had more in common with recount. We regularly referred back to the circle of the four literacies; the instability and fragmentation of the class meant we could not always develop work sequentially but the curriculum model of *CGE for Adults* still provided cohesion to the course.

Public Debate at work—some issues

Before I describe some of the work we did in class in the Literacy as Public Debate area, I would like to consider public debate in a workplace class as an issue in itself.

Encouraging students to critically appraise lines of argument and working with them to build their ideas into well structured texts is seen by some as a critically important aspect of education for work. In this view, employees need to be able to think creatively, weigh up issues and constructively discuss matters important to their working lives. While recognising that many employees already do this effectively, it is also true that the demands of workplace change and the complexity of issues to be dealt with have outstripped the capabilities of some employees. Employees need to be able to participate in decision-making and help shape new forms of work organisation without experiencing frustration at their own lack of command of language in its various forms. Implied in this view is the notion that genuine employee participation is valuable because there is mutual benefit to employer and employee alike.

The opposing view is that expressing ideas inevitably causes conflict; what the workplace, and the nation, needs is a less outspoken and less troublesome workforce. This view considers that workplace change will be devised by experts in the organisation, maybe with some consultative mechanism, and will be imposed from the top. The concept that increased productivity and efficiency are of mutual benefit to employer and employee is regarded with cynicism. There is no place for debate because it can only adversely affect productivity. The role of workplace basic education then is to teach employees minimum competency in narrowly defined tasks, specific to their current job.

Classes conducted by the WBE Department of the Council of Adult Education (CAE) are described not only as having a negotiated curriculum tailored to meet the needs of the student and the workplace, but also as 'broad based'. While never precisely defined, this term has tended to mean that course content is not confined to workplace material but because of perceptions about how literacy develops, a range of reading and writing will be dealt with. Much of the non-workplace reading and writing has been in Literacy as Self Expression. This remains very important. However, Literacy as Public Debate is also important both in itself and because it assists the development of writing workplace material.

The workplace as 'Public' domain

The workplace context imposes some constraints in dealing with Literacy as Public Debate and involves sensitivities and considerations which reflect the culture of the specific workplace. Issues can arise in working with any of the four literacies, but this literacy in particular calls for clarity about the role of the basic education teacher in the workplace, for a preparedness to explain the purpose of the curriculum and some degree of caution that recognises the constraints of the workplace.

The purpose of this literacy 'focuses on developing the capacities of adults to follow and participate in public debate. As citizens of a modern democratic country it is important that all adults be able to engage with contemporary debates ...' (*CGE for Adults*, p.136). If we consider the workplace as the community, a number of points need to be made. The first is that in many workplace communities, democracy is fragile and is not necessarily a value that shapes employer/employee relationships. The second point is that as workplace basic education teachers, we are outsiders, not really part of the community except for a very brief period each week. Compared with many of our students, we approach workplace issues from a position of considerable ignorance. Also, unlike our students, we can walk away from the issues when our class finishes. These considerations need to shape the extent to which we engage with our students in specific workplace debates.

However, it is often a difficult task to draw the boundaries in a way that balances our confidence in our professional judgement: a judgement which is based on educational criteria and a knowledge of our students, with the perceived sensitivities within the workplace. This is evident in my account of this class.

Public literacy in the PTC class

We began working on public debate during a 30 minute segment of Session 9 of the course. In the weeks preceding this, class participants had been concentrating on writing resumés and individual writing activities. What full group work we had done had focused on word-building, word knowledge and spelling strategies. While this activity was about expressing opinion rather than developing argument, it provoked enthusiasm and laughter and did much to develop group cohesion.

The activity in itself, like much of what I describe in this section, was no different from what many Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) teachers do regularly. We used the contributions to *Access Age* from the previous day. (This newspaper column prints brief contributions - 50 words or less - which can be made by phone.) A volunteer read a contribution. I asked for a brief comment on the topic from two to three people. Everyone then wrote quickly for eight minutes, not worrying about spelling and punctuation. I then asked for two to three volunteers to read what they had written, then moved on to the next *Access Age* contribution. At the end of the activity, students were asked to select one of their pieces of writing and reshape it into a piece up to fifty words long, including reference to the original *Access Age* contribution.

We were unable to return to work on public debate for many weeks because of a long Christmas break. By then, redeployment and redundancy had started to erode the class. Anxiety about work was reflected in the response of one student to the work we were doing in class. I had chosen an *Age* newspaper article concerned with the closure of rural railways. Students had a depth of knowledge about the topic, and I judged it to be not one of the contentious issues they faced in their daily working lives.

Nonetheless, Maria became quite anxious and expressed the view that reading this article, and even the research class members had been doing into the USA and Australian parliamentary structures, might mean 'they' would close down the class. David, who was also working on the passage, responded with 'This is a democracy isn't it?'. I talked about our purpose in doing the exercise.

Maria remained uneasy, in part because discussing railway closures was too close to work. But it was also the case that, like many women, she was unfamiliar with participation in public debate and in the democratic processes in our community. It is also true that in Maria's country of origin, voicing opinions about government policy is potentially dangerous. In subsequent activities I endeavoured to have a choice of topics available so that Maria would feel more comfortable with class activities.

Over the coming weeks we read and discussed a number of texts, 'Letters to the Editor' and an editorial on different issues. People worked in small groups to draw up lists of arguments for and against the proposed 35 km speed limit.

We also looked at the structure of the texts.

For example:

State's speed clamp sets national pace

Sunday Age
14/2/93

from Emmerson Richardson, National Committee on Transport, Institute of Engineers, Australia

Victoria's decision to lower the speed limit for residential streets later this year (*The Age*, 9/2) is a sound one which needs national adoption.	**Paragraph 1 (Introduction)** This paragraph states the issue being discussed and gives some background.
The current speed limit of 60 kmh—still in force in all states—is among the highest in the world, and fails to acknowledge that safety in the streets where we live takes precedence over the convenience of the drivers who pass through them. In 1992, 347 pedestrians were killed in road accidents, accounting for 17.6 per cent of the total road toll. How many of them might have been saved by slower drivers?	**Paragraphs 2 & 3 (Body of the argument)** Both paragraphs argue safety .
The distance needed to stop a car travelling at 60 kmh is almost twice that needed at 40 kmh. When a car doing 30 kmh hits a pedestrian, serious injury is rare, but at speeds greater than 50 kmh almost all accidents are severe or fatal.	Paragraph 3 explains the physics of stopping a car. The person writing is an expert.
Next month, the Institute of Engineers will be considering a plan to lobby for the national implementation of a lower speed limit in residential streets. With the element of human safety at stake, we trust this campaign will gain widespread community support. *Emmerson Richardson, Barton, ACT.*	**Paragraph 4 (Conclusion)** Rounds off the argument.

An editorial in the *Age* focusing on whether footballers were entitled to 'a safe workplace' was a more difficult text. Pre-reading discussion focused on predicting the likely content of the whole text and what we might expect to find in each of the three paragraphs. This passage was also used for a Read and Retell activity for some of the students. The major writing activity that students were involved in was worked on at home and during class time over a number of weeks:

Choose one of the following topics and write putting your view of the topic

- *The proposed closure of country railways*
- *The proposed 35 km/hr speed limit within residem\ntial areas*

Try using this structure in your writing:

Introduction	first paragraph	State your position. Give background information.
Body of argument	One or two paras	State each point of the argument and give supporting evidence.
Conclusion	Final paragraph	Sum up your argument.

In the writing that resulted, two students were unable to use paragraphing at all and their initial drafts were in many ways written records of how they would like to be able to express a position verbally. One of these students preferred to remain working on one long unparagraphed slab of writing, focusing on use of tenses, should and would, the use of 'a' and 'the', word order in sentences and the use of more abstract language. In class he wrote a second draft:

Bill's second draft

> Closures of Rural Railway Lines
>
> I think that the closures of lines in rural areas is the wrong thing to do. In my opinion they should remain open. It has been proven that trains, Freight or Passengers move people or goods a lot more efficiently and economically than road traffic.
>
> A few points we must remember before we carry out such drastic measures. One is that the cost of removing all the plant and equipment that already exists, another is the impact the alternative would have on the envirement, roads and the convience it would have on local trafic. The costs of establishing a new set up. The number of road vehicles that would be needed to do the same work that one train would do, a well as the amount of fuel that would be used and the polutants that be released into the atmosphere plus the increase in road accidents and hold ups in traffic signals.
>
> In the light of the points I have just raised they substaniate my opinion that Rural lines should remain open but plant, equipment, and communications should be updated to atract more customers thus increase revenue.

It is interesting to examine the developments occurring in successive drafts of Bill's work. His first draft had been a quick freewrite for fifteen minutes at the end of a class discussion the previous week.

Bill was aiming to pass the clerical test and was particularly concerned about spelling. While he was writing, his lack of confidence in his spelling tended to mean that he kept losing his train of thought. I suggested he concentrate on how he got his ideas down, spell words as best he could and underline those words he was unhappy with. I wanted him to begin to work on other aspects of Writing for Public Debate (Element 3.4: *CGE for Adults*, p.43), namely, how he linked ideas and information (3), his use of sequence to show statement of issue, presentation of reasons and summing up (4) and writing a number of paragraphs (5).

He handed in Draft 2 at the end of the session and I attached the following note for him to continue working on the next week:

My note re Bill's second draft

Dear Bill,

This starts off with a good clear statement of your opinion. The first paragraph is very strong.

As I suggested, you have three clearly defined sections: Introduction, Argument and Conclusion.

Read your second paragraph a couple of times and ask yourself if you have expressed your arguments as clearly and forcefully as you can. Would they be better reorganised into two paragraphs?

Jude

P.S. With the spelling of the words you have underlined, try the following strategies before you do the next draft.

(1) On a clean piece of paper, have a couple of goes at spelling the word. Choose the one that looks right.

(2) If you're still unsure, check how the word has been built up, e.g. *economic—economical—economically*.

(3) Check the dictionary.

In his third draft, Bill has underlined his main arguments, indicated the paragraph breaks and focused on stating argument and following it with supporting evidence. He has reread and self-corrected the passage, particularly looking at sentence structure and his use of full stops. His use of language, 'studies have shown that' has become more abstract and he has not needed to use 'I' or 'we' in this draft. While I had not commented on the language in his second draft, using more abstract language had been discussed in relation to the *Age* editorial we read earlier in the session.

Bill's third draft

Studies have shown that rail transport is more cost effective than road transport. Freight trains to move goods, need only one Locomotive and use approx 3000 litres of fuel to the job. this by comparison would mean a saving on fuel consumption, as with road transport it would take approx 40 semi-trailers to do the same each carring 80 litres of fuel, more wear an tear on our roads and more polutions released into the atmosphere)

By comparison it would take 40 semi-trailers carring 80 litres of fuel each to the same trip. The wear and tear on our roads is a considerable cost. the polutents released into the atmosphere thus destroying the Ozone layer or lead to the hot house effect. // The same argument can be applied to passenger service, only it would be buses not semi-trailers, and the number of passengers instead of freight that each carry. This would mean that it would be more cost efficient and enviromently compatable to use rail transport.

Linking Literacy as Public Debate & as Procedure

We began working on request memos shortly after the series of sessions based on extracts from the *Age*.

In my first report to the PTC Steering Committee I had placed the request memo in Literacy as Procedure partly because a request memo is part of the procedure of how you obtain something in many organisations. However, closer examination of what I was going to need to teach suggested that a request memo was primarily about putting an argument to the organisation even though one needed to know the procedure and protocol expected in the organisation.

Developing our own model

While it is easy enough to get blank forms for memos and reports, requests for actual memos or forms that have been filled in require a great deal of persistence and tact. Often no-one is prepared to produce something that could be used as an actual model. As a result our first task in the PTC class was to develop a model.

I used a request memo that had been developed by the Workplace Basic Education team for courses conducted in the Board of Works where such memos were called reports. I introduced the memo by saying I was not happy with it as a model, firstly because it was a model for the Board of Works and we had to make it suitable for the PTC, and secondly, I was unhappy with the language used in the memo and thought we could work together to improve it. This report is a model only. It is based on an actual situation but the names and places have been changed.

WORKPLACE BASIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

REPORT WRITING TRAINING COURSE

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works

File No. / / .

Subject: Purchase of Micro-wave Oven

A request is made for a micro-wave oven for the DMO K/S Depot.

Due to frequent staggered lunch breaks and operational requirements warming up meals becomes a problem. Good home made meals are ruined when left too long in the present conventional oven.

Micro-wave ovens have been proved suitable in other departments with this working situation/problem.

It is recommended that the National NN6406 medium-sized model or the NN6506 be purchased. Details can be found in the attached brochure. The main advantage is that these models are easy to operate.

J. Doe

Position A. Reporter
1/4/79

However, before we could begin rewriting the memo for the PTC, there were a number of questions to be considered. In the Board of Works, this memo was written by a supervisor to his manager. Who would write a request where they worked in the PTC? Some responses:

> 'In the tram division, it would usually be the union rep's job to ask for something like this.'
>
> 'I used to work in stores. People had to fill in a requisition form but there was usually a memo like this attached.'

In the following discussion, we talked about how correspondence was usually kept on file, possibly in the manager's office; they should check what was the right procedure for the particular type of request they were making; they would ask to see an example so they could check the layout expected in that department for such a memo; they would certainly need to do this if they changed jobs or moved departments. (See Element 3.2: Writing for Practical Purposes, Performance Criteria 1 and 4, *CGE for Adults*, p. 41.)

Together we rewrote the heading of the memo and deleted the names and date at the bottom of the text.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT CORPORATION
File No.: M/462/3
TO: Mr J. Spry, Manager, Eastern Division
FROM: Pauline Clark, Supervisor, Brighton Depot
DATE: 12.3.93
SUBJECT: Purchase of Micro-wave Oven

We read the remainder of the memo together and considered what similarities there were between this text and the texts they had been reading and writing in the previous week. Both are examples of the exposition genre.

WRITING AN ARGUMENT	THE REQUEST MEMO
Introduction	**Introduction**
State your position. Background information.	State what you want.
Body	**Body**
One or more paragraphs. State each point of the argument and give supporting evidence.	One or more paragraphs. Give reasons why what you are requesting is necessary. Give evidence.
One paragraph for each point.	One paragraph for each reason or point.
Conclusion	**Conclusion**
Sum up the argument.	Restate the request. Give more specific details.

The language used in the memo

We then needed to look at the language of the memo. The starting point for this was to visualise the key person who would make the decision amongst all those in the hierarchy who might handle the memo. What stance should be taken in relation to this person? 'I want a microwave oven' was too direct and demanding; in the words 'a request is made', the person making the request totally hides behind the sentence as if afraid to be found asking for anything. We explored the notion of different workplace expectations and I gave two contrasting examples: the Director in an educational institution always signed memos with his first name only and used a friendly and informal tone as if he were talking to his family; in the British public service until recently, requests always began with the words 'I humbly request . . . ' and ended 'Your humble servant'. (See Element 3.2: Writing for Practical Purposes, Performance Criteria 2, *CGE for Adults*, p. 41.)

We then considered what was the norm in the PTC (you could use 'I' but not 'I want'). We rewrote the first sentence in three different ways that everyone considered acceptable and worked through the remainder of the memo in a similar fashion and thus reconstructed a model suitable for use in the PTC.

I would like to request a micro-wave oven for Brighton Depot.

Because people have different times for lunch, warming up meals is a problem. Good home-made meals are ruined when left too long in the conventional oven currently in use in the depot.

Micro-wave ovens have solved this problem in other departments.

I suggest that the National NN6406 medium-sized model or the NN6506 be considered. Details can be found in the attached brochure. The main advantage is that these models have safety guarantees and are easy to operate.

Students then worked together in pairs to construct a request memo jointly in the following situation:

You are a station master at Greenmeadows, a small station on the Epping line. You have decided you need a noticeboard which has a glass cover that you can lock. The current noticeboard is a piece of hardboard which means you can't use drawing pins and if you use sticky tape, the notices blow away. The noticeboard is just outside the ticket window and the area is like a wind tunnel. Sometimes the notices are torn down. At other times people write rude comments on them.

Write a request memo to your supervisor, Mr J. Stringer. Remember to set your memo out clearly.

In the discussion that occurred in the pairs, the main issue was not how to lay the memo out, or how to start—after our earlier work on the microwave memo, these were relatively simple tasks. The difficulties people had lay in deciding what were the strongest arguments to use and how to sequence the supporting evidence. In other words, the competencies needed here drew from Element 3.4: Writing for Public Debate, Performance Criteria 3 and 4. (*CGE for Adults*, p. 43).

This second draft of two students' work shows a developing sense of how to link and sequence the text:

PUBLIC TRANSPORT CORPORATION
DATE: 17/3/93
DIVISION: Train Operations
FROM: Joe Bloggs, Station Master, Greenmeadows
TO: Mr J. Stringer, Area Manager
SUBJECT: Supply New Noticeboard

I would like to make a request for a new notice board for Greenmeadows station. The current notice board is unsuitable and I can't use drawing pins because it is made from hardboard neither can I lock it. The notices are constantly blown away.

At other times the young people write graffiti on the notices making it impossible for the other travellers to read. In addition to the above reasons the station looks very untidy, discouraging people from using the public transport system.

I suggest the new notice board with the glass and lock be purchased at your earliest convenience.

Conclusion

I would argue that the writing, reading and discussion in class in relation to topical issues in the newspaper greatly assisted these students to write work-related material. Although it is possible to learn how to write a short memo almost by rote, it can also be learned in a way that increases mastery over sequencing, structure and reasoning in language more generally. This is more likely to happen by exposure to a number of text types. Using a broader range of texts and text types enables students/employees to write memos with more understanding of what they are doing and why they are making certain choices (about what they write, what language they use, how they write). But it also means that when the type or format of the memo changes or as their job changes because of workplace restructure, they are more able to approach new written tasks with confidence and ability.

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A window on thought

Talking texts into meaning

Liz Suda

This paper examines a range of issues related to oral language competence. It is based on the premise that the pursuit of meaning is the primary focus of the learning process: that is, in order to know more, we learn. The paper presents a balance between theoretical considerations and the application of those theories in practice. The first section provides a theoretical examination of the relationship between spoken and written language. The second section illustrates the practical applications of that theory in the setting of a particular literacy class conducted in a neighbourhood house.

The case study is based on a class in which the students read the novel ***Cry Freedom****. The third section provides an illustration of how talking facilitates literacy and learning. The fourth section examines the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGE for Adults) and demonstrates the relevance of the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework to a class in which the emphasis is on oral language competence. Suda concludes that both teachers and students can learn a great deal from each other from talk in the kitchen at parties.*

Oral language —a window on thought

> The problem of learning through texts is, I believe, fundamentally a problem of translating the patterns of written language into those of spoken language. Spoken language is the medium through which we reason to ourselves and talk our way through problems to answers. It is, for the most part, the medium in which we understand and comprehend. (Lemke 1989, p. 136)

If spoken language provides a window on thought, as the above quote suggests, it is a fundamental aspect of the literacy process. Language is not simply a highly structured form of symbols, but rather is like a living organism that facilitates the making of meaning. It is driven by the desire to name and communicate experience. Lemke's point is that we translate written language into spoken language in order to reflect and understand, to talk to ourselves. We then translate those thoughts back into written language. Of course at higher levels of literacy, notably for academics and intellectuals (sometimes even politicians), spoken language often reproduces written forms. Literate thought develops over a person's lifetime and depends largely on the individual's language experience.

Oracy and Literacy

Whole language theory is based upon the premises that written and spoken language are part of the same whole. In this paper I want to provide a concrete example of how spoken language can be used to make meaning from written text. It is one example of how this understanding of the relationship between spoken language and literacy can be applied in the classroom. It attempts to acknowledge the nine educational principles upon which the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF) is based (*CGE for Adults*. pp. 148-153).

In summary, the principles seek to acknowledge that the four literacies (Self Expression, Practical Purposes, Knowledge, Public Debate) are needed for active participation in family, social, workplace, educational and community settings. Increased competence in all four has many benefits and so all should be explicitly taught. It is intended that the four levels of development will allow students to have a clear measure of progress which will also facilitate portability from one setting to another. The challenge for us as practitioners is to ensure that the demands of the accreditation process do not undermine the spirit of those nine educational principles.

Oral communication exists as a separate stream within the *CGE for Adults*. However, in the context of literacy, oral competence cannot be reviewed in isolation. If we acknowledge that oral language is an important part of the literacy process it is difficult to accept the concept of a separate subject that is taught in a linear modularised manner. We should be more explicit about utilising and developing oracy skills but we must do so by firstly recognising that oral language is integral to the whole concept of general education.

As the introductory quote from Lemke suggests, spoken language is not merely a set of exchanges that are systematically developed: it is also part of a complex process of making meaning and communication. It is at the heart of how and what we learn. We are only looking at part of the picture if we view oral competence as a separate component to be acquired as a skill in its own right. Rather we should be looking at the type of learning experience that would be appropriate to facilitate greater awareness of meaning, knowledge, literacy competency and, it follows, oral language competency. It may well be that explicit teaching of the performance aspects of talking should be considered, but this need not be done in isolation.

I will argue that the primary focus of what we do should be to give our students the opportunity to work with meaningful and interesting subject matter that explicitly develops their knowledge of how language works in spoken and written forms, and in a variety of contexts. Concern about describing competency levels should be secondary.

In attempting to penetrate the complexities of oracy, we should be trying to understand how spoken language interacts with written text and hence the literacy process. We need to utilise the total language experience of the learner. Lemke suggests that what something means to us depends essentially on which contexts we connect it with by way of association with other language experiences.

> To truly make text talk in the classroom, teachers and students must build semantic connections between the words of the text and other already familiar ways of speaking. More than this, they must become familiar with speaking the more formal language of the subject and must integrate it into their own ways of speaking. (Lemke, 1989, p. 138)

The teacher and student make meaning of the text by elaborating and commenting on the subject matter, thereby 'making the text talk in their own voices'. They need to practise and experiment with the new ways of expressing these ideas suggested by the text. We have all had the experience of acquiring specialist languages in the Social Sciences, Linguistics, Education or Science. It is a gradual process that develops with time and effort.

Two views of literacy

Hirsch's cultural literacy

To understand written text one also requires an understanding of the ideas behind the texts, the meanings of which are assumed to be understood. Hirsch (1983) caused great controversy in the United States when he wrote about functional literacy for citizenship. He argued that effective literacy was dependent upon knowledge of the world, people, ideas, events of the past, myths, legends and literature or as he calls it the 'translinguistic knowledge on which linguistic literacy depends'. His conclusion was that all Americans should learn about the history, literature and hence values of the dominant culture.

Critical literacy

A number of education theorists, especially those within the critical theory group, had serious argument with his analysis and conclusion. They countered his concept of cultural literacy by the idea of critical literacy as seen in the work of Freire (1987) and Giroux (1993), for example, which argues for a critical reading that reveals the ideological biases or cultural values embedded in the text. In short there are many readings one can make, and the teacher needs to acknowledge his or her own ideological biases.

Oracy, literacy and the *CGE for Adults*

The case study you are about to read seeks to apply some of the theory discussed above and offers an interpretation of the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF) where oral language is considered as part of the whole rather than as a set of competences to be acquired separately from reading and writing. It will seek to demonstrate how spoken language can be used to deconstruct text for the purpose of making meaning, following the narrative, exploring the ideas. It will provide the backdrop for an examination of the significance of oral language within VAELLNAF and the *CGE for Adults*.

The following account takes a very simple and common classroom activity—reading a book—and shows how it can be used to develop spoken and written language competence. It will attempt to illustrate the way in which talking through a text is essential for bringing greater meaning and purpose to the task.

Cry Freedom

Understanding precedes language

I sat at the table, wishing I had a tape recorder to capture an extraordinary conversation we were having as we waited for the other members of the class to arrive. Instead I wrote down some of what Amina said and asked if I could quote her:

> 'I showed the teacher this book (*Cry Freedom*) and she said 'You shouldn't be reading this, it's too hard for you, level six, you should read level two books.' I say to her, 'This is a very good book, at first I found it hard reading in the class but the teacher, she talks to us and she explains the ideas and I read it again and I understand everything . . . all the words.'

It is not so much that Amina confirmed the theory that I have been exploring, it was the pride with which she told what she knew. She was proud that she had read beyond 'her level' and more importantly, she knew that she had learned something new about language.

Amina now believes she can read anything because she understands how knowledge of the world gives her knowledge about the words. She has understood that words are more than symbolic representation of objects, they are concepts, ideas, images, dreams. She knows too that the more she understands the ideas the easier it is to read the words. She has understood the importance of oral language in the literacy process.

How did Amina come to understand this through reading a novel? This case study will describe how we talked to read a book.

Session 1

There were eight of us that day, seven students and a teacher. We were all women with a cultural mix of African, Vietnamese, Chinese, Italian and Anglo-Australian. Student levels ranged from 2 to 3 according to the VAELLNAF and the *CGE for Adults*. We had spent the previous term doing a lot of instructional writing for practical purposes—journals and current affairs.

We decided to read a novel which the group chose from the class sets available. (Community providers have limited resources so there were only six or seven sets to choose from.) The novel they chose was *Cry Freedom*, an abridged version (Level Six) of a longer book that was made into a film by Richard Attenborough.

I introduced the book. We looked at the front cover, the back cover and read the summary:

> This is the story of a man's fight with the government of South Africa. It is the story of all people who prefer truths to lies. It is the story of all people who cry 'Freedom!' and are not afraid to die.
>
> This novel is based on a true story about a white liberal South African journalist, Donald Wood, who develops a friendship with a black activist Steve Biko. (Briley, 1987)

I offered to read the first chapter, and the students followed the text. We stopped at the end and talked about what had happened. They had formed a general impression but they were unable to accurately retell the story in detail. Names, places, sequences were confused. Some teachers might at this point have gently suggested that the book was too hard and quit before the level of difficulty caused embarrassment. But no, the students were interested in the story.

This was a book about black people and there were two in the room. Apart from anything else these two might have been offended had we not continued. So we went back over the chapter and looked for words the class might not have understood.

'White liberal, what is this word?' Ten minutes later I was not entirely happy with my explanation of the concept of liberalism in a country divided by apartheid but they were all nodding and saying that they knew what they were reading about. And so on we went, discussing the difficult words. I was translating from written English to spoken English, and at the same time drawing their attention to the issues that were being raised in the story. At times it was necessary to translate a whole passage into more familiar language. The students actively engaged in the process by elaborating on what they had understood.

Amina and Fatima were particularly animated and spontaneously declared after tea break:

> 'I love this book because it is about black people and it makes me think about my home and all the troubles.'
>
> 'Yes it makes me remember how the French, the Italians, the English, they all come to my country Somalia and this one takes this part and the other one takes this.'

Forty minutes later we had read no further but we had looked at the map of the world, found Somalia and where it is in relation to South Africa. We had listened attentively to Amina and Fatima talking about the colonisation of their country and how one could find whole cities that looked as if they had been transported from France or Italy. The discussion ranged over different issues about language and culture. In Somalia, we were told, Arabic, French or Italian are the languages of the schools. It is difficult under these circumstances to maintain the local culture.

Language, in this context, is both a source of oppression and liberation since education leads to credentials which may mean a better life. These were universal themes that the group was able to relate to. They were coming to terms with the concepts in the book by checking back to their own experiences and understandings. They each told something of what they knew and together they brought meaning to the text.

I set them a small task. I asked them to reread the first chapter to themselves and then write a short summary (6-10 lines). This was not a difficult task for them since most of the participants had been keen journal writers and were eager to get as much experience as possible in writing. I assumed that they would want to write for productivity reasons. Sometimes we can be *too* concerned about having something to show at the end of a lesson so we give students written activities. It is also true that writing is a very powerful way of synthesising what we know and is therefore an appropriate whole language strategy: read, talk, write.

Because the text was difficult I thought it important that they attempted to put in written form what they had understood of the story after discussing it in detail. It is the translating from written to spoken and then back to the written form that develops students' written and spoken language, as Lemke suggests. Nevertheless, on this occasion, they were happier to keep talking and insisted that they would do it for homework. I was pleased that they felt they had 'worked' hard enough and relaxed into the discussion.

Session 2

Everyone had written something and they had all read ahead. They retold the story, excited by the idea that the education of white liberal Donald Woods was happening so smoothly. We read in turn around the table. We stopped and discussed words that became ideas. They were shocked by the relative affluence of the white South Africans with swimming pools and gardens when the blacks lived in transitory outer-city slums. There was also much discussion about the banning from public life of individuals whose views threaten the dominant regime.

This group of students was reading to understand not only the story line but also to know more about the political situation in South Africa. They wanted to understand the concept of Black Consciousness that Steve Biko was putting to Donald Woods. Their comprehension of the text was not entirely accurate but they conversed freely about what they knew. There was still a great deal of translation work to do, from written to spoken language, even though there was a lot of dialogue in the text.

Ideas conveyed through dialogue

On one level they found the structure of dialogue easier to read but on another the ideas embodied within conversations seemed harder to understand. They tried to read between the lines. We talked about the subtlety of tone in the piece. Is this gentle mocking or silent anger? They related to the humour in the story. Sometimes explaining jokes detracts from their humour, but it seemed a necessary part of understanding the subtlety of the interactions between Biko and Woods.

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The extract that follows provides an illustration of the text we read in that session:

> 'Now that they were face to face Woods could see that this man was Biko. He was young and handsome, his deep dark eyes were alive and sensitive. Woods knew that 'System' was the word blacks used for any white authority—police, government, army—and that Biko was referring to the two security policeman in the street.
>
> 'Of course, you approve of my banning,' Biko went on.
>
> Woods was tempted to say: 'You're right!' But he hesitated; he had come to hear Biko's opinions. 'I think your ideas are dangerous; but no, I don't approve of banning,' he said finally.
>
> 'A true 'liberal'!' Biko declared.
>
> 'I'm not ashamed of being a liberal,' Woods responded sharply. 'You disapprove of liberals, I understand.'
>
> Biko smiled. 'Disapproval is too strong a word,' he protested. 'I just think that a white liberal, who holds on to the advantages of his white world—jobs, houses, education, Mercedes—is perhaps not the right person to tell blacks how they should react to the way this country is governed.' (Briley, 1987)

My strategy was first to ask the students to retell what we had just read and then to go over some of the details which were still unclear. The above interaction between Woods and Biko took place during their first meeting. Both men knew of each other and saw themselves as coming from opposing camps. The conversation was thus very significant and heavily laden with inferential undertones. This extract prompted a great deal of discussion about banning, liberalism, apartheid and inequality. The relationship between the two men was also of great interest to the students and we spent a great deal of time trying to read between the lines, interpreting tone: e.g. humour, scepticism, sincerity, passion or suspicion.

Writing

After extensive discussion they began to write, while I discussed the previous writing exercise with individual students. It was interesting to see as I moved around the room how the retelling of the story varied from student to student. One student focused more on describing a particular scene while another tried to produce an ordered chronological retelling. Each student brought to the retelling a sense of their own experience and what mattered to them. The group activity of naming and explaining the text became a silent, individual, reflective activity. This, I think is the strength of the **Read, Talk, Write** approach. It allows the student to share and explore different perspectives which in turn enriches the individual creative process. It is the quality of the interactions that contributes to the learning.

Session 5

A number of people in the group came with descriptive pieces about their childhood homes. Lilliana wrote two foolscap pages about life in a small village in Sicily. She remembered the grinding poverty and hard work. She had worked all her life it seemed. Now, in her late thirties, she has chronic neck and back problems from working too long over her sewing machine as an outworker for a textile manufacturer. She understood how black labour is exploited in South Africa. She has been exploited in Australia.

Concepts and personal experience

The issues which emerged were complex and touched raw nerves. We trod warily amongst such memories. There seemed to be a need to relate concepts to personal experiences. What do I know of this idea? It is a checking back, as Lemke describes, whereby in talking to ourselves we confirm understanding of the concepts raised in the text. Their writing is a concrete expression of this inner dialogue, making meaning.

Many skills and competencies were being developed: their analysis of the text became more sophisticated as their knowledge of the situation in South Africa deepened. Critical Literacy skills were being developed because students were asking questions of the text. What is the stance of the writer? Whose side is he on? How might a person of a different persuasion describe these events? Should we be looking for other perspectives?

Session 10

We realised we would not finish it before term ended unless we devoted all of our class time to reading, talking and writing about it. We started to spend both our two-hour sessions each week on the book. Some sessions we mostly read and only discussed minor points. Other times we spent the best part of the session writing or looking at each other's writing about the book. Most of the students were going home and writing about what they had read in class that day. This generally meant they reread the relevant chapters before writing about them.

Towards the end there was much less need to talk about unfamiliar words. The talk was more to share and confirm an understanding of the events. A number of people brought newspaper articles on present-day events in South Africa. We planned to watch a short segment on the widespread unrest in South Africa from *Behind the News,* an ABC current affairs program designed for schools. We decided to watch the film of the book for our last session. Some said they would reread the book before the film.

Last session

All the participants came to watch the video. We watched silently for the most part, engrossed in the images on the screen. I remembered how powerful the opening scene was on the big screen when I first saw this film. Shown on the small screen the image of huge bulldozers and truckloads of police dressed in full riot gear descending upon a sleepy night scene in a black shanty township, was still discomforting.

We paused for a break after an hour and the students declared the film was 'just like the book'. The film in fact followed the *un*abridged version of the novel but they identified with what they knew about the story. It was like visiting old friends. They could almost anticipate the dialogue and quote what Steve Biko or Donald Wood would say. Some students suggested that they would like to read the unabridged version of the book.

At the end of the film we sat while the credits rolled and attempted to re-orient ourselves to the setting of the Neighbourhood House. Outside the sun was shining and students were arriving for the one o'clock class. We had run over time. One by one they left bidding each other farewell . . . 'See you at the Christmas party'.

We had finished our book; the Christmas party you will read about later.

Reflections

Reading a novel can form the basis of many activities aside from purely literary analysis. It can stimulate an interest in the issues raised in the text and be thematically linked to activities which encompass the four literacies as described in VAELLNAF. For example, the related issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody in Australia could have been explored as an issue for public debate. The history of the colonisation of South Africa might have been explored to increase students' knowledge of the context. The cultural differences in family life might have been explored more fully. A comparison of the technological facilities available to blacks and whites might have made an interesting exploration.

Due to the limitations of time in a four-hour class, many areas of potential interest were only briefly touched upon for the purpose of better understanding the text, but they could well have been developed into explorations of greater intensity and depth. The issues explored were generated by the students' efforts to make meaning of the text and follow the story. The broader the students' perspective, the deeper their understanding of the text.

A number of people in this class had never read a novel in English, their new language, even though they had attended many hours of classes. They were delighted at how easy it was to do so in a group situation. Reading a novel with a group might seem a simple activity yet it requires a complex range of literacy and thinking skills. This realisation has led some to believe that reading a novel is something the learner tackles only after understanding the formal structures and systems of the language. This story suggests that quite the opposite is true. It is necessary to read a book in order to develop a better understanding of the structures of the language through the process of making meaning.

Since language is the currency of thought, the student automatically reflects upon the way in which the language system constructs the idea. Linguists have shown that young children constantly monitor their use of the language, alternating some speech patterns and repeating others. It is something they do naturally in the process of acquiring language. The teacher can make this process more explicit for the learner by facilitating systematic elaboration and commentary on the text.

As educators we know that all people, young or old, will learn more effectively when they are stimulated and excited by the idea of knowing more. The *Cry Freedom* class participants were motivated to penetrate unfamiliar text because they wanted to understand the issues raised in the story. Sometimes this simple fact is obscured by adherence to systematic, dogmatic or inflexible approaches to the development of the learner. It sounds a note of caution for those attempting to devise curriculum at a particular level. The literacy process is a complex area which engages the learner in a range of discourses related to being a human being in society. The role of the teacher is to ensure that the student understands that literacy is a way of being, of seeing the world. Bradshaw's article 'Powerful Discourses' (1993) discusses this issue in some depth and alludes to the curriculum model upon which the *CGE for Adults* is based.

Interpreting the VAELLNAF and the *CGE for Adults*

The curriculum model (*CGE for Adults* 1993, pp.127-169) upon which the Reading and Writing and Oral Communication streams of the Certificates are based defines the different purposes of literacy as self expression, practical purposes, public debate and knowledge. It attempts to define the process involved in developing competence in each of these four areas of literacy. However the interrelationship of the different purposes of literacy is stressed throughout the document.

The need to acquire competency in the four literacies at each level presents the teacher/curriculum designer with some puzzling dilemmas when devising an appropriate curriculum for a group of people who may have quite different areas of competency within a similar level.

Competencies and complexities

Consider the needs of a student who might be at Level 2 in Reading for Public Debate, Level 3 in Writing for Self Expression and Level Four in Oral Communication competencies for Public Debate against the needs of a student who is Level 4 in Reading for Self Expression, Level 1 in Writing for Public Debate and Level 4 in Oral Communication competencies for *some* Practical Purposes. This suggests either that each student might benefit from an individualised program or that the teacher might opt for a more general approach that takes account of the different elements of the Reading and Writing Framework?

To take this point a little further. Does the student need specifically to engage in writing for practical purposes in order to demonstrate competency in that area? Would not a general improvement in literacy for self expression improve confidence and therefore competence with other tasks? I am not suggesting that writing for practical purposes should be excluded but rather that it may not be the only means to improving competency in that area.

Using competency statements as a checklist

Writing for public debate requires critical analytical skills which are skills relevant to writing for practical purposes. Gaining competence in writing for practical purposes may also complement interest in writing and reading for knowledge and so on. They are separate but not mutually exclusive elements of the whole. This suggests that it is not necessary or useful to follow the structures outlined in the Certificate document too literally. My own approach is to use the competency statements within the four literacies as a guide or checklist for reflecting upon and evaluating what is happening in the classroom.

The *CGE for Adults* provides a useful language for describing and developing the abilities of the learner in the literacy process but it does not necessarily provide a prescription for pedagogy in the classroom. Rather it provides a framework upon which we might map a range of meaningful learning experiences that reflect the needs and interests of students. Students should be given the opportunity to explore the content of the curriculum using a variety of literacy genres, including dialogue.

Novel-reading competences

A deceptively simple activity such as a reading a novel can be evaluated by checking that the competencies meet the requirements of a particular level within the certificate. For example, it could be said that the students in the *Cry Freedom* class achieved the performance criteria required at Level 2, Reading for Self Expression:

1. Identify the main point and the general flow of the story or piece.
2. Locate the key descriptive details.
3. Link content to prior knowledge or experiences, with similar stories.
4. Express an opinion on particular characters or the story as a whole.

(*CGE for Adults*, 1993, p. 34)

And Level 2, Reading for Knowledge:

1. Identify the particular genre.
2. Identify the key sentences, often opening and closing ones, that summarise the single point.
3. Differentiate between generalisations and specific features or examples.
4. Combine content with prior knowledge on the subject.
5. Identify any overtly expressed opinions.

(*CGE for Adults*, 1993, p. 36)

Connecting old knowledge and new knowledge

The students in this class were able to move between relating personal experiences of racism and oppression to their knowledge of events related in the story. They learned to interpret dialogue as narrative and to distinguish between opinions and fact. They gained new knowledge and were able to link it with what they already knew. They expressed, in writing, their opinion of events and ideas that they had read and talked about. It was not necessary to provide two different texts to assess their competence in these areas.

Assessing competence was not the purpose of reading the book. It is not absolutely necessary therefore to select particular texts to develop a particular competency. The assessment of competencies is the *end product* of the process of reading and comprehending a book, writing a letter, telling a story—not the starting point for developing a curriculum.

When 'a turn' becomes 'a pirouette'

In the *Cry Freedom* class, talking about the text provided the focus for making meaning and developing knowledge. The purpose of the talking was not to ascertain students' oral competence. However the talking component of this class did meet the performance criteria for Oracy for Self Expression at Level 2.

Consider these:

1. Talk about several personally familiar events, ideas or experiences.
2. Include a broader view than the personally immediate.
3. Intelligibility occasionally makes demands on other participants.
4. Inconsistent use of interactional routines; some topic setting and supporting.
5. Some provision of feedback.

(*CGE for Adults*, 1993, p. 68)

Many practitioners have expressed concern at the highly technical language used to describe oral competence in the *CGE for Adults*. It is one thing for practitioners to access and understand the terminology of linguistic theory, another to apply that knowledge in the classroom. I have likened the concept of 'turn taking' (an interactional routine) to the technical difficulty of a lay person attempting a ballet pirouette (a turn on tiptoe)—the mind is willing but the body is unpractised in the art.

But a pirouette is indeed an excitingly graceful movement when executed competently. It is not enough to simply receive detailed technical advice on how to do it—'stand on toes with arms elevated gracefully'. Rather the different steps must be translated into a *feeling* for the movement.

Similarly, engaging in collaborative discourse with people from different backgrounds requires a genuine feeling of warmth, tolerance, co-operation and a language style that accommodates those differences. Turn-taking has its subtleties and tricks, however it is but one small part of the endeavour of communicating and making meaning with a group of people.

In attempting to ascertain whether my students had achieved the competency level described above I had to consider the overall positive feelings I had about the students' progress and make explicit the particular skills that had been developed. I concluded that the students were clearly able to demonstrate a much deeper level of oracy skill than described here and in fact much more. They used spoken language to better understand written language and in so doing were able to broaden their use of the language.

Competence or competently?

They may well have demonstrated the competencies described above but they did so in the context of making meaning, developing strategies for translating written text into spoken language, developing their knowledge and understanding of apartheid, relating their own experiences to the development of concepts of freedom, equality, human rights and so on.

Nevertheless, practitioners will want to use the performance descriptors of the *CGE for Adults*, but to do so they will need to interpret very carefully concepts such as 'intelligibility occasionally makes demands on the listener'. If we are to make judgements about the pronunciation and grammar usage of native speakers we must recognise that these judgements cannot be made on the basis of accepted norms of standard English.

The cultural factors at play here are complex for both native and non-native speakers. The danger is that we could opt for a definition of intelligibility that is culturally exclusive and thereby undervalue genuine progress in attempts to communicate and learn with others.

Language and life

As I have suggested elsewhere (Suda, 1993), oral language is at the heart of what it is to be a human social being. The way we talk reflects how we feel about ourselves, the world, other people, life in general. We must be very careful that in trying to be explicit about the skills required for effective communication we do not become obsessed with the separate parts of the whole.

Rob McCormack once captured the sense of what I am trying to say by asking: 'When do you smile?'. Is there an agreed formula for when we smile, touch or be still with our students? And should we be assessing such deeply personal and subjective qualities? More than this, can we accurately describe a person's competence without taking these things into consideration?

Increasingly we are beginning to realise that the problem with naming competencies is that there are so many complex interrelated variables that we simply can't name them all. Should we even be trying? My concern is that we may become too preoccupied with naming the categories at the expense of the actual delivery of the curriculum.

Ticking the talkers

The problem of assessing oral competence is clearly beyond the scope of this paper. However the preceding discussion raises a number of obvious problems in this respect. The practical difficulties of accurately analysing a complex range of interactional and transactional processes in the course of conducting a class seem insurmountable in the context of day-to-day practice.

Ticking checklists may well appear to be a logical solution but the practicalities of doing so with a group of students raises a number of questions about how we relate to our students and their perceptions of the teacher as examiner. The process becomes more complicated when oral language activities are integrated into the overall curriculum of reading, writing and

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knowledge. No doubt many of these issues will be explored in more detail as assessment and moderation processes develop.

The process of reading a book provided a rich and stimulating learning experience which also helped to demonstrate the students' competencies in reading, writing and speaking for different purposes. It is the rich and stimulating learning experience that we should focus on when designing the curriculum. The VAELLNAF provides a useful common language for practitioners to use when reflecting upon their practice and designing curriculum which acknowledges the interrelated purposes of literacy.

Language and being

I want to stress again that the assessment and verification of the competencies that result from the learning process is a separate but related issue to what and how we should teach, a fact the field is only just beginning to explore more fully.

In writing this case study I have tried to show that learning the language need not be a process of drill and repetition of a myriad rules but rather a natural human activity that reflects the desire to communicate and know more. What we should strive for in our classrooms is an atmosphere in which learning is synonymous with being.

In order to accommodate this broader view of language and learning I believe that we must strike a balance between understanding the theory of language as described by linguists whilst making explicit our own intuitive understandings of how our students use language to learn. I have found it useful to develop metaphors that relate linguistic definitions to everyday language and experiences. The pirouette is one such attempt to help us to get a sense of the feeling of competence. Another way of looking at language acquisition might be to liken it to riding a bicycle. What follows is my attempt to use this metaphor to illustrate the approach to language learning advocated in this paper.

Language acquisition—practising the theory

Getting the feel for riding a bike

If we look at language acquisition as analagous to learning to ride a bicycle we get an idea of the complex range of skills and processes that need to happen at the same time in a synchronised fashion. The beginning rider only needs a rudimentary understanding of the bicycle as form, structure and function in order to be able to ride from point A to point B. The rider must achieve a certain balance and fluidity before s/he can go anywhere.

Similarly, literacy acquisition is a complex psycho- and sociolinguistic activity that requires specific mental processes on the learner's part; simply learning the rules doesn't mean that one can use the language to communicate. Getting the feel for riding a bike is similar to getting the feel for the language. The most important aspect of riding or literacy is that the learner must be given the opportunity to actually ride the bike, use the language.

Children acquire language naturally and easily in the course of their lives as do adults. The role of the teacher is to extend the students' language experience. The teacher is expected to know how language works and how it is acquired. A bicycle mechanic generally knows a lot more about how a bike works than the average rider.

Like the bike enthusiast who has deconstructed a vehicle, the teacher should understand the function of each of the parts but also know how to put it all back together again so that it can be ridden for the sheer pleasure of feeling the breeze. Students too should understand the structures and functions of language but they can do so in the context of reflecting upon the pleasure of making meaning and communicating.

The desire to communicate and make meaning is a powerful motivating force for language acquisition and competence. This is true of both native speakers and those seeking to acquire English as another language. Whether one is reading a novel, writing business letters, instructions on how to make a cake, or an analysis of a scene from Australia's past, it is important to give the student the opportunity to use the language, experiment and make mistakes. In reflecting on those efforts they can then begin to understand how to use the language more accurately, learn some of the rules, express ideas and communicate experience.

For both native and non-native speakers this process also involves penetrating the culture that the language reflects. The values, traditions, beliefs and myths of the culture are embedded in the structure and function of its language. So we do not simply teach a language, we also teach the values of its culture. Penetrating the culture of a foreign land (and for many native speakers literacy is like a foreign land) is not quite as easy as learning to ride a bike and so we need to be ever-mindful of how these values are transmitted in the text. The development of critical literacy skills provides another dimension to our reflections on the process of language acquisition.

When 'a turn' means 'a party'

The Christmas party referred to earlier was a very festive occasion with food from different cultures prepared by the many participants of our neighbourhood house programs. The room was alive with the conversation of many languages, including English. There was much smiling, gesturing and good will.

In such situations, where teachers and students share in each other's cultures in an informal way, we are able to see very clearly the complexities of accommodating different cultural norms and values within our classrooms. We shouldn't be frightened of this diversity but rather we should embrace the different perspectives that many cultures bring and utilise them for positive purposes.

This is not necessarily an easy task when there are many different and opposing views and perspectives. It is sometimes difficult to accept the values of another culture, but there are also moments of awkwardness that can be simply laughed away. The following account of an interaction at the Christmas party is an example of this.

I was about to sit down at the table when one of my students, a middle-aged Vietnamese woman, intending to show her respect, rose quickly from her chair, apologised, and gestured towards the chair saying:

> 'My best teacher. . . you must sit at the head of the table.'
>
> 'No, no,' I protested, smiling and shaking my head. 'But you are the best students. This is Australia, we are all equal, teachers should not have a special position.'
>
> She was puzzled at first but then laughed and nodded:
>
> 'Ah yes, freedom and equality. We learn this with you.'

I am indebted to these students for what I have learned with them.

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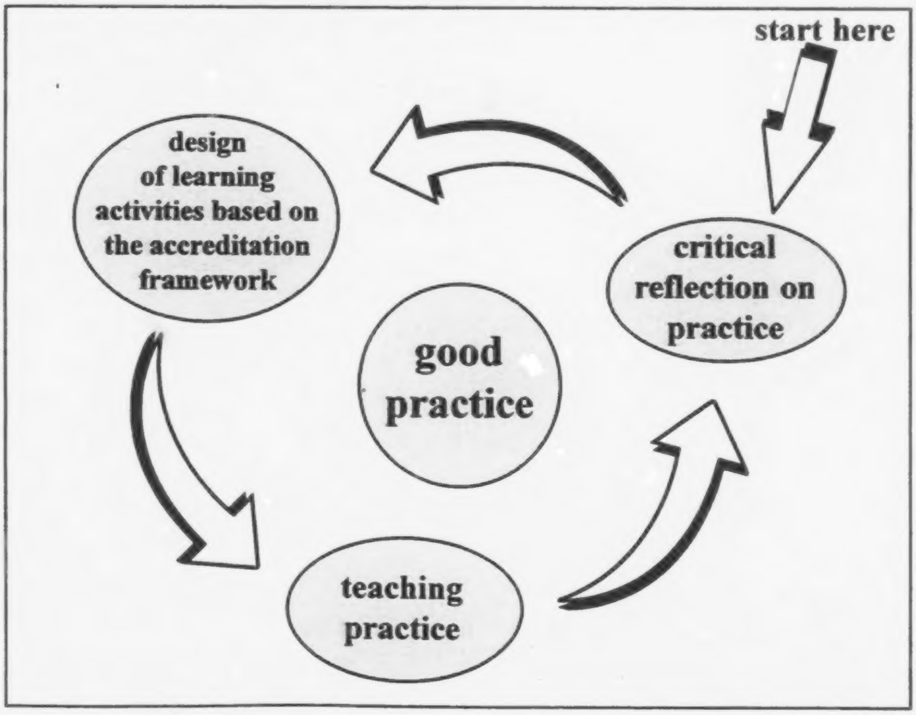
From heart to head

Using Koori Culture as a Theme in Teaching Non-English Speaking Background Women

Barbara Goulborn[1]

Because the development of the Certificates of General Education for Adults is firmly grounded in good practice, or more correctly, ***praxis****—the notion that practice is inseparable from theory—it can be used as a tool for critical reflection and thereby enhance our teaching. The action of critical reflection is a good way to come to grips with CGE for Adults. This article demonstrates how the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF) was used to develop curriculum in our particular class, in which Koori culture became a theme in teaching women of non-English speaking background. From this a model has been devised which shows one way of getting started with VAELLNAF and continuing in the spiral of good practice (Fig. 1).*

Fig 1. The spiral of good practice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design of learning activities based on the accreditation framework
critical reflection on practice
good practice
teaching practice

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[1] This is a slightly reworked adaptation of an article that originally appeared in *Good Practice*, No. 16, Literacy and ESL Section, DEET, ACT, 1992.

The students

The class described in this paper was a Women's Basic Education group at Broadmeadows TAFE. The class was held on two days per week, for four hours per day, for a total of 36 weeks. The women began the class after being given an initial assessment which used the 4 Levels of VAELLNAF as a way of classifying potential students in classes that would best suit their needs. This group was made up of women who were ready to begin Level 2 (that is exit Level 1).

Non-English speaking backgrounds

All class members were from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) and were long-term migrants. They were from Italy, Greece, Egypt, Turkey, Germany and the Ukraine, and were aged 30 to mid-60s, the majority being in their early 40s. They had mostly attended primary school overseas but a few had been to high school. A couple of younger women had attended school on arrival in Australia, but not for long, as they were totally alienated by the experience, often being subject to racism as well as not understanding much of what was going on in lessons. In addition there had often been other pressure to get a job to support the family. Many had left to work in clothing factories.

All the women had had hard lives—being displaced by war, living in poverty, or perhaps changing from a rural, peasant society to an industrial society in the space of a six-week boat journey to Australia. They had all worked long and hard in factories: making clothes, meat pies, electric blankets and even removing the innards of chickens, at the same time as having babies and running the domestic affairs of their families with little or no help from other family members.

Deciding to attend classes seemed to be the first time they'd done anything for themselves rather than for others. Some women were still making breakfast for their 20-year-olds and therefore were late for the early class. Others had to rush home to cook lunch for husbands. This selflessness was usually quite unconsciously part of their female cultural role, and extended into caring roles in their communities. Some women worked voluntarily for their church organisations. Two women were doing unpaid work on telephone counselling services for their ethnic group. All women showed a great sense of generosity towards, and concern for, the other members of the class.

Some of the women in the class were working but wanted to progress into new jobs, others wanted to start a career after working mainly at home for some years, or being retrenched. A few older women had no career aspirations, but retrenchment or retirement had given them *time* to study English—a great luxury! These women wished to communicate with their grandchildren in fluent English and to be able to read and write for personal and community purposes. Mostly the women did not have a great deal of confidence in their ability to learn although they were not lacking confidence in other areas of their lives, such as in their family roles.

Critical reflection

To start at the critical reflection stage of the **spiral of good practice**, I firstly drew up two simple grids: one for writing, one for reading. These grids each had four columns: **Self Expression**, **Practical Purposes**, **Knowledge**, and **Public Debate**, representing the four literacies of VAELLNAF. I also found that I needed an extra box that ran horizontally across the bottom of the grid for 'non-text-specific' language activities, such as grammar, spelling, punctuation and pronunciation work. Onto these grids I mapped teaching activities which had taken place in my Women's Basic Education class over a few weeks.

Through this mapping I could see that the balance between the four literacies was not too good! The Self Expression area predominated. In one sense this didn't worry me too much: I'd expected it because I'd very much encouraged the writing of personal narratives. The students entered the class saying they'd start writing 'later on', when they'd 'learnt how to', but now, after hard work on their part *and* mine, they were composing heart-rending stories that had us all in tears, or fascinating accounts of life in pre-industrial areas of southern Europe that would delight ethnographers as much as they did me and other class members. They'd all developed their writing skills tremendously and in doing so had realised that their stories, and therefore their lives, had value, and were interesting to others. (This was the hidden agenda!)

From personal to public

Having reached this point, the task for me was to extend the women's writing and reading into non-narrative areas without abandoning their new-found story-writing skills. This does not mean that I believe that personal writing, Self Expression, has less value than other forms. Current literacy theorists tend to belittle this domain, lumping it together with 1970s 'individualist' schools of literacy teaching that supposedly only benefited middle-class students, favouring the explicit teaching of more 'socially powerful' areas of literacy.

However, although it would be difficult to deny that these 'socially powerful' domains are keys to employment, success and access to the big wide world, perhaps they are only 'powerful' (and personal genres less powerful) because they are the domain of men (and personal genres more the domain of women). In women's literacy classes I always start with writing activities in the personal domain because this is an area in which women easily find success. But I do not solely see these activities as starting points. They do ease the way in to other forms of writing, but I also see personal writing as something to be continuously developed and enjoyed.

As in all the classes I teach, but especially because this was a class of students from non-English speaking backgrounds, I wished to develop speaking and listening skills across a wider range of genres. I also wanted to broaden their world views and to help them make a leap (or at least take a step!) from the domestic into a more public culture.

My inspiration for how to make this move came from an ABC Radio National program which I'd seen listed in *24 HOURS* magazine. The program *The*

Australian Experience featured Rhoda Roberts, an Aboriginal woman from the northern New South Wales Bundjalung tribe telling stories both traditional and more recent. These stories linked into the ones written by the women in the class. They used the same narrative genre, even though they were told orally, but they were one step removed from the personal because they were told by someone unknown to the students, and they were about a culture other than their own.

In particular, Rhoda Roberts's story told to her by her grandmother about the Aboriginal Protection Board taking the children away became the starting point for a project based on the theme of recent Koori history and culture. Rhoda's story took us from *heart to head*: from empathising with the families in her story through to trying to understand the issues involved from a broader conceptual stance. This was not to deny the importance of the emotional side of understanding, which is usually seen as an integral part of female culture (and hence undervalued in our logic-driven society!). It was an attempt to add to this empathy an ability to move from the concrete to the abstract: into the arena of history, analysis, opinions, politics and understanding cause and effect.

All of these areas require development of concepts and of frameworks in which to place information about the changing world and through which to make some sense of it all. Moving away from a solely domestic view of the world was also required. And of course literacy development and conceptual development are inextricably linked. You can't read texts unless you can understand quite a bit of what they're about. And once you understand what they're about you'll be able to read and understand more of other texts and will be able to better access public culture.

The curriculum

I explained to the students, using my grid, that I wanted to help them move into other 'literacies' named in the *CGE for Adults*: Literacies for Practical Purposes, Knowledge and Public Debate.

They were interested in this idea. They were also very interested in Rhoda Roberts's stories, and in particular in the Archie Roach song *They Took the Children Away* (Literacy for Personal Expression), featured in the radio program, which moved us all deeply. I wrote a transcription of the song and the Koori project took off!

I won't go into methodology I used in any great detail but will give a few examples of activities used whilst working on the project:

- reading prediction
- vocabulary development
- read/note/tell
- watch or listen/note/write
- summary writing
- cloze exercises

- discussions
- inferring from text
- expressing opinion …

In other words, run-of-the-mill literacy/ESL activities.

Koori history and culture

What really mattered were the texts which were all on the theme of Koori history and culture, especially during the period after white settlement. The texts moved between the personal and the removed, the concrete and the more abstract (from Literacy for Personal Expression through to Literacy for Knowledge and Literacy for Public Debate). These 'jumps' allowed students to extend their conceptual development and therefore their ability to read and understand more of 'the world out there'.

Some of these texts were: Sally Morgan's story 'The Letter' from the book *Paperbark*; the *Women of the Sun* videos; the John Pilger film *Secret Country*; the *Koori* catalogue from the Museum of Victoria's excellent exhibition which the class visited; selected chapters from Sally Morgan's *My Place* and Humphrey McQueen's *Social Sketches of Australia*. Newspaper articles also featured as texts integral to the project. These included a newspaper article on Archie Roach's life and music, and *Age* articles on the anniversary of the referendum, on tribal justice, and on being a child taken away from Aboriginal parents. I didn't have to look far for these articles: I just attacked the newspapers with scissors and also dug up a few texts I'd snipped out in the past.

Making connections

Through reading and writing about these texts students made their own links with similar and related news stories and issues: of abducted children, religious and racial intolerance, deaths in custody and indigenous populations in other countries. Several of the women impressed their teenage children with their knowledge of contemporary Koori music!

The Koori-related texts were not the only ones studied in class. The move to develop across the four domains of literacy also brought us into contact with articles on the latest royal marriage break-ups, letters to employers, notices about the recalling of yet another defective electric fan as well as health-related items. But the Koori theme dominated in terms of student interest and in its significance as a vehicle for taking off into new realms of knowledge and understanding, for me as well as for the students.

Koori culture and migrant women's culture

I think this use of Koori culture worked so successfully because it was meaningful to the women in the class on several levels. Firstly, on an emotional level the women empathised with the issues facing Aboriginal people. This emotional engagement enabled learning and understanding on other levels (from a personal to a public stance).

Secondly, perhaps in some ways women's—especially migrant women's—culture is closer to Koori culture than is 'mainstream' Aussie culture. Both Koori and women's cultures are marginalised in this society; women and Kooris (male and female) are still to a great extent 'invisible' in public life; family and ethnic loyalties are all-important.

Proper English: unfashionable or politically incorrect?

When I initially plotted my classroom activities on the grid I noted that many of them (grammar work, punctuation, spelling memorisation) were not essentially genre-specific, but cut across all four literacies and were relevant to them all. I consequently adjusted my grid by adding to it a **non-text-specific language activities** box. Here I would like to look at how I addressed some of the issues in the area of grammar, pronunciation and 'proper English'.

'Speaking proper'

Most of the women in the class perceived themselves as in need of 'improving their grammar and pronunciation'. In other words they believed they did not speak 'proper English'. Nevertheless the majority of the students were well able to communicate in English on familiar topics. When talking about less familiar topics their competence was not very different from that of a native-English speaker approaching a new area, where the unfamiliarity with content (and therefore language related to the content) would slow down communication.

Tuning in

In order to understand the students' talk, I need to 'tune in'—listen intently, concentrate more as perhaps I might with a native English speaker with a regional accent that was unfamiliar to me. As language teachers this 'tuning in' comes fairly automatically, but unfortunately not all listeners are prepared to do this, and will often 'cut off' and label a non-standard English speaker as 'not being able to speak proper English' as soon as listening becomes hard work.

Of course it would be wonderful to educate the whole population to sensitively 'tune in' to non-standard Australian English, to recognise we are a multicultural nation, that there is more than *one* version of English: that ABC pronunciation and 'received standard' English is one type of English which happens to have soared into 'properness' status due to its use by the powerholders in our society, who have traditionally been the major stakeholders in the written word as well as the official spoken word.

Dialect and accent

Of course I'd love to turn all this around. I'd very much like the many varieties of spoken English to be given equal status, reflecting the rich mêlée of cultures in Australia. But progress is extremely slow. A few British regional accents are now heard on the BBC world news bulletins on the ABC. The new US president has a twangy southern way of talking. Regional accents from other English-speaking countries are just about OK in terms of public acceptance on

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the media. However, we almost never hear Australian-Aboriginal English, Australian-Italian English, Australian-Arabic English in public 'speech acts'.

The power of the proper

I believe that we have to accept that our NESB students' demands to learn to 'speak proper English' are not misguided but are informed by their knowledge of power and status in the 'real world' (which we'd love to change faster). They need 'proper English' to get a job, to make themselves understood by people who don't know how to 'tune in'—sometimes from bloody mindedness, but mostly from lack of confidence.

Sociolinguistics

The 'do you teach your students proper English?' question has always been a contentious one. When I first started teaching in schools in the very multicultural Brixton area of London, sociolinguistics was just making a mark in colleges of education through the writings of Basil Bernstein, Halliday and authors of the **Breakthrough to Literacy** program. I could see that my West Indian students (as the contemporary research told me) were well able to switch between their West Indian English and their Standard English, as appropriate. To me, the reality of Standard English being the language of power justified the 'political correctness' of enabling those children to use Standard English competently in situations where to do otherwise might mean they were put down (as 'inarticulate', 'illiterate', 'not speaking proper').

Teaching the grammar of power

Back to Broadmeadows: the same principle holds. I saw it my duty as a teacher who believes language competence moves people nearer to taking more control over their lives/destinies, to address these demands from the women for learning 'proper English'.

This does not mean to say that I believe English is a fixed set of unchanging rules, nor that I make the sort of equations between 'Goodness', 'Cleanliness', 'Low Crime Rates' and Standard English made by the current British Ministry of Education. What it does mean is that I accept my students' unarticulated understanding that language is tied up with hegemonic cultural values and hence power—and that they would like a share of that power.

Different Englishes

How does this stance translate into classroom practice? Firstly I address their pleas to learn 'proper English': I tell them I (and others) believe that there isn't only one kind of English—there are many. That what society holds to be 'proper English' is only one variety that has taken a high status and significance because it is the variety that those with power and status speak and write.

I also try to show how Standard English is not always the 'best'. We read excerpts from Lucy Frost's collection of journal entries by early women settlers: *No Place for a Nervous Lady* contrasting the emotion conveyed in one woman's 'badly' spelt, unpunctuated writing with the 'correct' but rather sterile writing of another.

Languages of the people

I try to get them to value all the varieties of English they speak as 'proper'—which makes Australia such a rich, diverse cultural 'minestrone' (to quote an Australian – Italian English speaking student). I point out (and if possible demonstrate) the many varieties of English language and accents in other English speaking countries. But I also acknowledge that the 'social construct' of proper English exists and that there are a lot of social contexts in which use of other varieties of English means discrimination and ridicule, especially in writing but also in speaking. I don't need to tell them the latter—they know it already and that's why they've come to the class. They've come to a college exactly because they know that teachers speak—and can therefore hopefully demystify—proper English for them.

Learning by ear or by eye

These students have not learnt the English they know in a formal manner. They have learnt it 'by ear' or really by use in real social contexts. They haven't had to learn the language of language. They don't know what a verb or an adjective is, although if they *have* heard about the concept of parts of speech they think it might help them if they understood them. Even the concepts of past, present and future are not familiar terms. ('Is "past" a minute ago as well as a week ago?') So traditional grammar-based ESL methods are not appropriate.

The grammar of Standard English

Analysing their use of English and comparing it to Standard English, some typical needs emerge:

1. A need to be able to have control over use of past tense verbs and understand the relationship between positive and negative forms. e.g. '*You go to church yesterday?*'
2. A need to be able to use present tense negative and question form. '*I no like politicians.*' '*You no like politicians?*'
3. Omission of articles: '*I went to city.*' '*I bought new dress.*'
4. Unnecessary duplication of subject (noun and pronoun), e.g. '*My husband, he works in Coolaroo.*'
5. The whole problem of the '*-ed*' in past participles.
    - How to pronounce when reading (yes, people sometimes do have to read aloud in 'real life').
    - How to write past participles.
    - How to use them when speaking (some people have never noticed a difference between the spoken words *walk* and *walked*, so expect them to be the same when written).
6. A few other perennial items:
    - '*I am very bored/ boring, interested/ interesting*'

- *after/then* confusion
- spelling errors due to over-reliance on regularity of letter-sound relationship.

Here are a few of the learning activities I used with my students to 'facilitate their ownership of Standard Australian English'.

1. Journal Writing –Grammar and Spelling

The students started with a page set out like a diary. In writing about the week's activities they don't have to think too hard about the content. I give them a model of journal writing but they do not have to stick to this—it's not a model as 'genre' teachers would use.

Model journal

JOURNAL	*May, 1993*
Sat 8	*I went for a walk in the Botanical Gardens and had an ice cream with my kids.*
Sun 9	*I went shopping at the market near me which opens on Sundays.*
Mon 10	*Very busy at work today. Felt tired when I got home. Watched a good documentary on fruit bats—very interesting.*
Tues 11	*My eldest daughter came over to see me. She lives in Coburg. We had a good chat.*
Wed 12	*Work was very busy again. There's a new supervisor who seems very nice. Had visitors around for coffee and made a cake.*
Thurs 13	*The neighbours were very noisy last night so I didn't sleep well.*
Fri 14	*After work I went to see a movie. 'Sister Act' with Whoopi Goldberg. Very funny!*

This is not very original, but a great way to get people writing. It's been criticised as mundane, even voyeuristic, but I have found it a very popular and effective activity. This is especially true of women's classes because women are more accustomed to the personal domain of language.

Copying

I also use a compilation journal, where I roll all the typical journal entries into one to show use of past tense verbs. This was used as a text to copy repeatedly, so verb forms could be internalised. A rote method of learning, but appropriate to the purpose.

Compilation journal

MY DAY

At 8:30 my friend called me and asked me to go to her place for a coffee. But I had to take my mother to the doctor's later on, so I couldn't go.

At 9:00 I took the children to school, then I cleaned the house and made the beds. At 11.00 I took my mother to the doctor's because she doesn't drive.

After going to the doctor's I had lunch with my mother at her place. We had a good chat about the family and we planned to go shopping together in the city next week.

At 3:15 I collected the children from school. On the way back I stopped to do a bit of shopping at the supermarket.

When I was preparing the dinner I had a surprise visitor, my sister-in-law who lives in Coburg. We had a cup of coffee and talked about her daughter who is overseas.

Later on my husband came home. After dinner my husband and the children watched television and I just relaxed.

Correcting

I corrected the students' journal entries, usually in the classroom, acknowledging the content without being nosy or personal, talking to them about specific items of grammar individually, but noting common problems to be addressed with the whole class.

Sometimes I would rewrite the whole journal entry with the 'correct' grammar and spelling and the student would copy this, often several times over, for homework. This rather unfashionable process of copying certainly helped students internalise grammatical structures. I always had plenty of blank spelling lists so that incorrect spellings could be listed as work, were being corrected and these words could then be memorised for homework.

Spelling

I always made sure that students knew some memorisation methods for learning spellings.

How to memorise spellings	
1.	**Copy** the word you want to memorise. Check you have copied it correctly.
2.	**Study** the word: **Look for** small words in the big word, for example **Wed** nes **day.** **Underline** or highlight any part of the word that look difficult. **Look for** any familiar beginnings or endings, such as **-ing** or **pre-**.
3.	**Trace** over the word, saying *the word* (NOT *the letter names)* as you trace. Do this several times.
4.	**Cover** the word.
5.	**Write** the word without copying.
6.	**Check** to see if your spelling is correct. Do this frequently until you have no problems remembering the spelling of the word.

Word lists

They also found that a list of the 100 or 200 most used words was very useful, as was a list of irregular verbs so that, if unsure, they could check on correct forms.

A checklist of the 100 most-used words

These 12 words make up one quarter of all reading/writing.

a	and	he	I	in	is
of	that	the	to	was	it

The words above plus the 20 below make up one third of all reading/writing.

all	are	as	at	be	but	for
had	have	him	his	not	on	one
said	so	they	we	with	you	

The words above plus the 68 words below make up one half of all reading/writing.

about	an	back	been	before	big	by
call	came	can	come	could	did	do
down	first	from	get	go	has	her
here	if	into	just	like	little	look
made	make	me	more	much	must	my
no	new	now	off	old	only	or
our	other	out	over	right	see	she
some	their	them	then	there	this	two
up	want	well	went	were	what	when
where	which	who	will	your		

This method of correction of grammar and spelling was used for all writing activities. An important aspect of this method was that the students could do as much homework as they wished quite independently. A few minutes snatched here and there every day to copy and memorise was all that was required, and their use of standard grammar and spellings always improved.

2. Language through the rhythm of chants

I borrowed Carolyn Graham's idea of Jazz Chants to teach language through the rhythm of 'chants'. This uses the rote method of internalising syntax and colloquialisms through familiarity with the words of a 'chant'—somewhere between poetry and song words, very much like 'rap'.

A former colleague in my department visited one of Carolyn Graham's classes in New York and was impressed by her ability to use the 'moment' to spontaneously improvise a 'jazz chant' to teach new language appropriate to the situation (e.g. '*Why are you late for class, José, José?*').

After successfully using some of Graham's published chants, I devised a few of my own, putting them on tape with a percussion rhythm added. Very simple grammatical structures like *'No I don't'* were learnt this way, with a lot of fun as everyone 'got into the rhythm'. This proved a successful method of internalising standard structures in spoken English without having to first understand the metalanguage of names of parts of speech.

These journals and chants are only two ways I used to teach 'proper English'. They both incorporate 'rote', 'repetitive' learning methods which are often frowned on. However, the activities were very successful in terms of learning outcomes and much enjoyed by the students. The students were not treated as mindless automatons, as were my generation, obliged to chant Latin verbs and recite 'by heart' our catechisms of Christian Doctrine, poems and Shakespeare (which I still remember, incidentally).

The women could see a purpose and, more importantly, could see results from their learning, and certainly in activities such as journal-writing their individuality and person was valued.

Quality improvement

This brings me back to the **spiral of good practice**. After initial reflection, I had moved on to filling the gaps by developing appropriate curriculum for my purposes, selecting suitable texts and designing related classroom activities. Now, after teaching this curriculum, I'm back at the *critical reflection stage*. Hopefully, this spiral movement through *reflection, curriculum design, teaching,* then again through *reflection* will produce a continuous enhancement of teaching practice. This is probably what makes teaching enjoyable, challenging and dynamic: knowing you can always get it a bit better next time! Referring to the *CGE for Adults* grid makes this 'Quality Improvement' process less ad hoc, and provides a structural base to guide our teaching practice.

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Postscript

It might be useful to show the relationship between some of the activities undertaken in the class described in this article and the competencies in the *CGE for Adults*. This will show that the use of competencies need not necessarily change the positive features of the ways in which we were teaching prior to the existence of the *CGE for Adults*. In fact, we should be able to add to the quality of our practice by using the competencies to describe what students are able to do after completing a course. This process provides benchmarks so that student progress can be acknowledged through credentials and pathways into subsequent courses planned. It also provides a framework for classroom-level curriculum/syllabus design.

The *CGE for Adults* does not specify content or context, leaving this open to input from the teacher and student group, according to the particular context and needs. This is an important feature of the *CGE for Adults*, as highly prescriptive curricula do not leave any room for negotiation of the curriculum content, thus making the whole teaching/learning process very 'top down'. The fact that the *CGE for Adults* does not specify content means that the teacher must reflect on how the student is to achieve the appropriate competency: through what content, which methodology. While this process in itself does not guarantee the perfect curriculum at the classroom level, it certainly sets the scene for this possibility, and allows for the principles of adult learning to be put in place through tailoring content and methodology to student interests, their current and future needs, and the future contexts for using what they have learnt.

The following grid shows the links between the competencies described in the *CGE for Adults* and the class activities through which the competencies were achieved.

Relationship between Elements of competence, CGE for Adults and classroom activities on a Koori theme

Element of Competency from CGE for Adults	Examples of activities through which competency achieved/assessed
Reading and Writing	
Element 2.3: Writing for Knowledge Write a short well-organised report on one subject.	Students write a report on the contents of the video *Women of the Sun*: Maydina—'The Shadow'
Element 2.4: Writing for Public Debate Write a simple argument expressing a point of view on a matter of personal interest.	Students write at least one paragraph on their views on the forcible removal of children from family.
Element 2.5: Reading for Self Expression Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from a simple, less familiar narrative or literacy text.	Students read the words transcribed from the Archie Roach song, *They Took the Children Away*.

Element 2.7: Reading for Knowledge Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a short reference or informative text on a mostly familiar topic.	Students read short article from exhibition catalogue, *Koorie*, on the concept of 'terra nullius'.
Element 2.8: Reading for Public Debate Demonstrate that meaning has been gained from reading a short persuasive text on a familiar topic.	Students read *Age* editorial on 25th anniversary of the Referendum: 'Blacks are still an underclass'.
Oral Communication	
Element 3.3: Oracy for Knowledge Participate in longer presentations.	Students make a short presentation to class on a recent TV news or documentary item relating to Aboriginal culture or politics and respond to questions on topic.
Element 3.4: Oracy for Public Debate Participate in longer exploratory episodes—discussions oriented towards the solving of a problem or issue.	Students in group discuss the role of Christian evangelicalism in white attitudes and behaviour in relation to Aboriginal Australians.

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Section Two

Background Discussion

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Oracy through literacy:

literacy through oracy

Philip McIntyre

Increasingly, second-language learners, albeit of long-term resident status (often referred to as non-English speaking Background (NESB), are attending basic education classes. As one woman said to me years ago:

> *'I'm not migrant like people here. I been here long time. Have the business too (a card shop in the city). My friends all Australian.'*

In other words, she felt that classes for newly-arrived migrants were not going to meet her need, which led me to refer her to adult literacy providers. Contact between English as a Second Language (ESL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) providers began with such learners and was reinforced by the 1991 Government white paper on Language and Literacy provision.

English-speaking background (ESB) and NESB learners also seem to share similar literacy needs. (I wonder if this is because many NESB learners are virtually illiterate in their first language, and are thus learning a 'first literacy' anyway.) Where they differ is that NESB learners generally require a greater focus on oracy.

The first half of this article describes these long-term resident, non-English speaking background learners and the teaching of ESL and ESL literacy. The second half describes my approach, an approach which begins with the aim of teaching reading and writing, but has a second aim of equal status—teaching oracy to these NESB learners.

Oracy and Basic Education background

Is there a place for Oracy in Adult Basic Education?

I have been struck by how seldom oracy development is mentioned in ABE. I presume it must be because ABE teachers are used to dealing with native-speakers, whose oral language is not in need of the same attention as second-language learners. Indeed, when I first saw the draft oral competencies of the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF), I wondered who they were being written for. I thought: how could you teach native-speakers the language they already owned? But on reflection, I realised ESL teachers are dealing with similar questions in their assessment of learner language levels. Let me explain.

In Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR) assessment, the highest level, Level 5, refers to learners who have 'native-like' ability. But which native-speaker are we thinking of by way of comparison and what is a native speaker anyway? Is the language use of a native speaker with limited formal education the same as that of a native speaker with extended formal education? It may well be, but, if it isn't, how does it differ? Certainly, it is not because it is non-standard or incomplete.

Extending registers

What then is the difference? It could be termed one of 'range', that is, the ability to operate in a range of different 'styles' of language (often called 'registers' in ESL teaching), differs from one native-speaker to another. These styles are what Suda describes as 'speaking for different purposes' and are defined by the contexts, settings and interpersonal relationships in which they are used.

Thus, the range of styles employed is usually perfectly adequate for a speaker's present life contexts. If, however, those life expectations change and the required competencies and skills also change (as is currently happening), then competency in a range of language styles and contexts may need to be expanded as well. Consider, for example, the participation of factory workers in Quality Circle discussion groups and training programs on site.

Similarities and differences

These considerations are also appropriate to NESB learners as the range of language styles to which they will be exposed in this changing situation in society is increased. The similarity in approach to English-speaking Adult Basic Education and to ESL learners, then, may lie in extending the range of settings and contexts in which their oracy is used and the styles appropriate to them, that is, different oracies. The difference lies in the greater focus on language elements (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) that NESB learners need. Oracy has traditionally been the major focus of ESL classes, though often from an excessively grammar-focused approach (which is not relevant to native-speaking learners). It is knowledge of this focus that ESL practitioners can bring to their ABE colleagues.

An Oracy curriculum

The learners addressed by this curriculum

The learners addressed in this curriculum are, for the most part, *longer-term resident immigrants* whose level of literacy is well below their level of oracy. However, there are also some recently-arrived immigrants with a similar language profile, such as women from Thailand and from the Philippines married to Australians.

Full employment

Long-term residents in Australia have usually been too busy getting on with their lives, working overtime to make a decent wage and bringing up their children, to do anything about improving their language (especially if they arrived in the 1950s and 1960s, a time of full employment). They were aware that their English was the source of a number of 'put-downs'; a barrier to other things they might have wanted in their lives; even a reason why they remained, to some extent, second-class citizens in their adopted country. However, such considerations were not over-riding. Their lives were relatively comfortable; their level of English sufficient for their daily purposes.

Recession

But times change. In the 1980s, as recession hit and as award restructuring took off, many of the traditionally 'migrant' areas of employment suffered retrenchments or layoffs: initially in industries such as footwear, clothing and textiles, food-preparation and packing, predominantly women; but later in car and other companies, predominantly men.

Simultaneously, the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) and the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) were beginning to put long-term unemployed onto Newstart allowances and offer them retraining. Thus, many of the learners I teach nowadays are unemployed, retrenched workers on learning contracts. This means that improvement of language and literacy is required for their retraining or re-employment potential.

Retraining

Many of these learners are now realising that they may no longer have such employment potential, especially when they are over fifty, have little or no education, little or no literacy in English, and are from the types of jobs that are now disappearing in the 'new' workforce. This is a particular problem with NESB males, who have always seen themselves in the traditional role of breadwinner, and have now lost their *raison d'être* and self-esteem, and feel useless.

For these learners, the decision to come to class may not have been their own. Chances are that some may not have come at all had their hand not been forced. Nevertheless some may revel in the pleasure of doing something for themselves for the first time; they may appreciate the chance to learn what they never had time to before.

Views of education

Most of these learners are not competitive in their learning as they feel too inadequate to compete. Instead, they often co-operate with and support each other in their efforts to learn. This is particularly the case with women learners.

Women, however, may tend to defer to men in the group and not say anything that may be too 'debatable', often because of their background culture, their desire to be nice, or taking a caring approach. These same qualities, however, mean that women often promote group cohesion. The exploring of 'safe' topics outlined in this paper, that is, ones they know and have experience of, contributes to group cohesion, allowing them to share their experiences and empathise with those of others.

The nature of their use of language

Grammar

Meaning is made through grammar. What counts for these learners is often grammar, though they may not be quite sure what it is: they simply feel that they ought to know it in order to speak and write well. They come to class with the expectation that these inadequacies will be rectified by 'formalised' attention and classes. However if these expectations are met by emphasis on explicit grammatical forms and metalanguage and the delivery of formal classes, they are often daunted and may become depressed. this was the dilemma I had encountered in traditional oracy approaches to long-term 'stabilised learners'.

Redundant language forms

The problem is that the inadequacies are more often to do with form rather than meaning. For example, one common inadequacy is the non-use of past forms of verbs:

> 'Yesterday I go to market'

instead of

> 'Yesterday I went market'

When used with another time indicator, the verb tenses of English are 'redundant' to the meaning, that is, the meaning is clear without use of the correct tense, as in the two utterances above.

The English of these learners exhibits many other examples of omitting 'redundant' parts of the language. These redundant forms include such things as:

- tense forms
- articles ('a', 'the', or none at all);
- pronouns and their referents (it, them, us, in final position);
- other connectives (who, which, where, there, etc.);
- word endings (-ed, -ing, -s, -ment, -tion, etc.).

However, they often include one redundancy which is inappropriate in English—a pronoun duplicating the noun subject, e.g. 'My brother he go to school'.

No feedback concerning form

One of the reasons these forms stabilised in the first place was that speakers received no immediate feedback in the form of a response alerting them to their error. So there is no perceived need to change the form.

Consider these two utterances, one inaccurate, the other accurate:

> 'Yesterday I go market.'
> 'Yesterday I went to the market.'

Both forms communicate the meaning, are easily understood, and attract responses such as:

> 'Did you?'
> 'Was it much cheaper?'

Even if speakers do manage to change the stabilised pattern, they may get no perceivable 'reward', or feedback, for their efforts, since the response remains the same.

These cases contrast with the following situation (which occurred with one of my learners):

> 'I buy a house.'
> 'Oh, have you?'
> 'No, going to. Ah, that's why I must change verb.'

This points up three considerations: First, I made the classic teacher mistake of trying to guess (wrongly) the time frame referred to from his misuse. Second, the verb form alone in English can indicate time, intention (non-redundant feature). Third, the immediate feedback showed him his error.

Modifiers and mispronunciation

In addition to lacking redundancy, the language repertoire of students may also lack modification strategies and grammatical forms to achieve these: modifying forms (*may*, *could*, . . .), qualifiers (*fairly*, *rather*, *somewhat*, . . .), hypothetical forms (*if*, *would*, *could have*, . . .). Their way of expressing ideas or opinions may sound too 'black and white', too definite or factual in many real-life interactions.

Mispronunciation also needs to be attended to where appropriate. But we need to separate faulty pronunciation from accent. Accents are linked to personality and may not be open to change anyway. Although traditionally regarded with less esteem in this society (with the exception of the French accent!), foreign accents are becoming more acceptable because of the appearance of news reporters with foreign accents on ABC-TV and SBS.

Developing an approach for these learners

Since 1984, I have mainly taught these language-learners. The approach I use is described by one of my colleagues and myself in *Steps to Literacy* (Moraro & McIntyre, 1988).

These are the learners who were known in the applied linguistics and ESL teaching literature as 'fossilised learners'. That is, their second language (English) had stopped developing years ago, at a level sufficient for their needs at the time. They had used it this way for so long that it appeared 'set in rock' and was not likely to ever develop any further, hence, the terminology. (I must admit that at the time, trying to teach such people with more traditional ESL methods, most of which focused on errors, rather than development, made it seem as if what the literature was saying was true!)

Finding new approaches

Two developments helped my approach to these learners. One was the renaming of 'fossilised learners' as 'stabilised learners', which indicated more succinctly what had happened in their language development: they had learned what they needed or could get initially and their language development had stabilised.

Second, I began reading in the professional journals about research into 'second-language acquisition' and the theory of 'interlanguage'. Basically the researchers suggested that these learners were developing concepts and theorising about the rules of the language; that their language was systematically approximating the standard. This led me to believe that their language might indeed begin to develop further, given the opportunity, the desire or the need or a specific reason, such as retraining. (For a brief readable summary of these terms, see Littlewood, 1992, Ch. 4.)

Can learners perceive and incorporate missing language?

In teaching oracy to these learners, however, I had been most frustrated by their inability to perceive the grammatical elements missing from their speech patterns. My work with and study of pronunciation of second-language learners was leading me to believe that they could not 'perceive', i.e. 'hear' certain elements in native speech and therefore could not know they were present. The speed and rhythm pattern of native English speech causes difficulties in distinguishing elements such as unstressed words and syllables; sounds are also elided or assimilated into those following. A small example:

I walk to market.
I walked to the market.

It is difficult to hear the difference between these two utterances, because the '–ed' gets joined to the following 't' sound, while 'to the' is glossed over so fast that 'the' may not be perceived either.

At the same time (early 1980s), I met my colleague and fellow author, Gail Moraro. She was teaching basic reading and writing to these same learners. At the time, Gail was aware of some isolated instances of how her work with their literacy seemed to be having an incidental effect on their speaking patterns beginning to 'destabilise' some of the entrenched errors or omissions; and this began to give me a glimmer of hope that perhaps further development of their speaking might indeed be possible, provided it was approached in a different fashion.

Gail's work started me thinking that in learning to read perhaps the learners were beginning to 'see' what was missing. Thus I got involved with Gail in teaching them to read more effectively so that they would find for themselves the bits that were missing. In other words, I became aware that focusing explicitly on the missing parts of their oracy was probably counter-productive and that possibly as a by-product of seeing complete forms in print, there might be a carry-over into oracy development. All of this thinking led to the development of the approach Gail and I proposed in our book aimed at the teaching of ESL literacy.

Towards integration of oracy and literacy

Thus began the focus on the interconnectedness of oracy and literacy. It was a natural development anyway, because both our approaches had involved much 'talk' for, during and from reading and writing tasks. It was, in fact, an expression of the need to translate written language into oral language in order to make meaning out of the written language and reflect on it, although I had not actually thought of it in such terms before.

Teaching ESL literacy has made me aware of the need to connect spoken and printed language more explicitly, not only to match them in the reading process, but also to allow learners to become familiar with speaking and writing the more formal language in appropriate contexts. Furthermore, if their non-standard forms are to change, their meaning and effect on listeners has to be recognised before any change will be attempted.

In recent years, in classes and in-service training sessions for general ESL teaching, I have been developing this approach, which integrates the teaching of literacy and oracy. The essence of the approach is that oral language is considered part of the whole rather than a set of competencies to be acquired separately. It begins with reading language in print and then proceeds to speaking. Most ESL teaching has traditionally proceeded in the other direction, from speaking to writing.

Describing the approach and curriculum

Essence and aims of the approach

The approach is premised on two main attributes of these learners. One, they have already acquired language, which they can use readily to negotiate everyday oracy interactions, though the range of these may be limited by both lack of opportunity and their language level. Two, they also have knowledge and experience of systems and institutions in this society. However, as we have discussed, their oracy is formally fractured and their literacy is only beginning.

The approach aims at expanding the range of interactions they can deal with by building on the knowledge of Australian society they already have, thus enabling them, as Bradshaw says, to leave the class wiser, and with an extensive repertoire of linguistic, personal, social and political resources.

Language and social activity

I firmly subscribe to the view that language and social activity are intimately linked. It is important that learners understand levels of meaning beyond the literal (words, grammar and vocabulary): the communicative function (what is the intent of the utterance), and the interactional (how each utterance affects the development of the discourse) because they determine the way meaning is made and perceived. (For a simple explanation of these levels of meaning, see Littlewood, 1992, Chs. 1–2.) Language is not value-neutral; so learners need to see the value system and cultural assumptions behind each language utterance and choice of utterance as well as its relevance to the particular context.

Discourse

An essential aspect of the approach is examining the effects of the same idea expressed in different ways, in different tones, with or without modifiers, inviting or expounding etc.—in other words, language as a social activity and as a personal activity. The responses of other speakers ('interlocutors' in linguistic terms) can reveal mismatches and other problems of communication such as unexpected interpersonal effects. The knowledge of how utterances affect responses will contribute to their awareness of the need to modify their language use and add to their language repertoire.

This can best be achieved in a content-based approach which defines contexts and their behaviours, and exemplifies characters in real-life interactions negotiating meaning. In developing these interactions (the 'discourse', in linguistic terms), the use of conversation strategies, the turn-taking and turn-getting and the variety of utterances become apparent.

The focus on content and discourse as distinct from a primary focus on grammatical and linguistic features ensures that 'language acquisition' continues, while allowing a context for formal 'language learning' by creating contexts where learning can take place through natural communication (Littlewood, 1992, p. 62).

Catering for different abilities

The focus on content also helps cater for groups of people with quite different areas of competency. The range of different activities integrated into each curriculum unit provides opportunities for learners with differing skills to act as information sources for each other as well as being able to listen and learn from each other. This integrated approach uses stimulus newspaper articles for language experience reading. The content and settings of these articles then become the basis for further oracy and literacy work in each curriculum unit.

The approach is also underpinned by a philosophy that the language taught needs to be constantly recycled: these learners benefit from many repeated opportunities to reuse the same elements of language. First, in recounts. Second, in the oral interactions between characters in the dialogues. Third, in oral interactions, in which the various characters express different perspectives. Fourth, in the written tasks. Finally, much of the language is revised in different contexts in further units.

From concrete content to abstract social systems

The stimulus materials used are newspaper articles of events or human interest stories that might be likely to happen across cultures, but within some of the wider themes and social contexts mentioned above. The advantages of using such materials are that they provide real contexts, with real characters, within which language activities and tasks can be more realistically situated. They serve as an entry point to discussions of wider 'systems', and thus lead learners to a deeper understanding of Australian society. The direction is from the concrete and known to more abstract ideas and concepts and moves between Literacy and Oracy for Self Expression, Practical Purposes, and Knowledge and Public Debate.

The unusual

'Since natural learning depends on the learner's active mental engagement with the language, motivation is an important factor' (Littlewood, 1992, p. 55). In selecting articles, I consciously look for pieces with a somewhat 'odd' or unusual experience or problem, which will first prompt questions in the mind of the learner as to 'Why? What happened? How did they get out of the problem?, and second, establish a need to 'negotiate' the problem or associated events, using language.

The appeal of the 'odd' or unusual nature of the events lies not only in their innate interest, but also in the fact that they almost always prompt recall of related events either in learners' own lives or the life of someone they know. These events and experiences lead to a need to investigate and understand more abstract 'systems' or institutions. This, in turn, necessitates discussion of the issues involved, leading to greater knowledge and understanding of the systems.

Problematic oral interactions

Unusual events also provide opportunities for more problematical oral interactions between characters, or between characters and public agencies, to arise as the teaching content in the context. This feature of real-life interaction is usually lacking in ESL course books or texts. In these texts everyone seems to be polite to each other, all interactions turn out successfully, tradesmen are always available and come on time; public officials are always helpful! In other words, these texts do not really provide scope for negotiating meaning. Negotiating problematic interactions broadens the repertoire of learners.

Exploring the curriculum framework

The approach is based on the 'Action Sequence' approach, outlined by Chris Corbel (*Using the System*, 1985) and also owes something to *Interaction* (O'Neill, 1976). One identifies a sequence of actions or events that arise in a particular real life context. Starting with a description of a central or core event (the stimulus article), one can then think through the sequence of 'actions' that the people in the article would have to negotiate in real life, both leading up to the event reported and following on from it.

Language episodes

Listing the 'Action Sequence', it is possible to identify the language episodes (see *CGE for Adults*, 'Background Work: Oral Communication', pp.175 - 179) involved in each action: spoken interactions that might take place, both face-to-face and telephone; feelings that might be expressed, problems that might have to be solved; institutions that might have to be approached; social, cultural and organisational knowledge that might need to be obtained through reading; areas of discussion on which opinions might be sought; and finally writing tasks that might be performed.

To some extent my approach is influenced by the 'genre' approach to literacy, and the oracy work might also appear 'genre oracy' to some. Central to the approach is the notion that what something means depends essentially on the contexts in which we find it and that the social purpose determines the text, whether oral or written.

Oral genres

Many oral genres, like literacy ones, are relatively conventionalised formats adapted to social contexts and their purposes. Hence there is a certain amount of predictability about the 'language routines' involved, though the choice from a range of possible utterances is ultimately unpredictable. There is power for learners in knowing a variety of genres and being able to use the language routines inherent in them. Language routines are more easily identified through the Action Sequence approach. (For more on oral genres and routines, see also *Teaching the Spoken Language*, Brown and Yule, 1983.)

Strategies in the approach

Prediction activities

The stimulus articles are introduced through accompanying pictures and headlines, enabling learners to draw on their life experience to predict what is in the text. Thus they realise that they know something about it already. In oracy work, they predict what conversations might take place between characters in the events and what they might say, based on their knowledge of the events. Similarly, the likely content of any further reading is predicted first. In writing, too, their knowledge of the event, the task and the system to which it is related serves as the predictor of possible written text. Prediction helps learners realise that their knowledge and life-experience are entry points to understanding oral and written texts. It also reveals to us what language they already know and hence what they need to be taught, making teaching more relevant.

Listening as entry to text — reading aloud

Reading articles aloud, firstly without text and later following text, enables long-term resident learners to use their most highly developed skill in English—listening. Learners can relax knowing that they do not have to immediately decode printed words, but can just focus on meaning. The more learners understand the ideas in the text, the easier it is to read the words later. The listening task, therefore, is to check how much of the content their predictions covered. Further readings aloud enable them to obtain other specific information to maximise comprehension.

Teaching Literacy

Language experience reading

If the levels of reading skills in the class are generally very low, we move straight to building a 'Language Experience' text on the board. Students' recall of the article just read becomes their text for further reading activities. (I always reassure them that we will return to the article itself later in the unit.) As the course proceeds the content of 'language experience reading' can be learners' personal experiences stemming from the article, rather than the events in the articles themselves, if preferred.

In language experience, although the spoken word form is written down, it is still basically an oral text. (The point of its being written down is to facilitate the process of matching spoken words with their printed forms.) The form of expression in the spoken version can be compared to the form in the printed text. If the reading levels are higher, further readings of the comprehended article can incorporate activities of text decoding to reinforce and extend the match of printed forms with spoken ones.

Literacy for Self Expression

This mostly takes the form of written recounts of episodes or events, following oral recounts given by learners. In written form these can also be read by other learners. Personal letters, greeting cards can also provide some scope for greater self-expression.

Literacy for Knowledge

In reading and writing, there is a heavier emphasis on literacy for practical purposes and knowledge. There may be reading associated with the original article, or stemming from the oral work or other activities that have been associated with it. For example:

- other articles detailing similar events
- pamphlets, reports, brochures, information about places, people or institutions mentioned
- laws related to events
- video of a related news item or relevant issue

All of these can prove useful.

Literacy for Practical Purposes

In addition, there is reading in preparation for practical writing tasks, such as greeting cards, banking stationery, application forms, bills and receipts, letters.

Early on, in most courses, I introduce the skills of map-reading and cardinal compass points on maps, by using a map of the world and of Australia.

Similarly, I introduce skills associated with reading and decoding the *street directory* (eagerly accepted by all classes perhaps because they are so universally useful):

- distinguishing the sections of the directory
- the whole-of-Melbourne maps at the front
- how the individual maps fit together
- decoding the challenging format of the streets section
- locating each student's own address
- showing someone else where they live
- finding the other person's address (which, of course, entails that person having to write his or her address).

These skills can be recycled in every subsequent unit of work (locating the events; finding addresses of characters in the events; locating public buildings and institutions; noting addresses and writing directions to get there).

Literacy for Public Debate

As the learners envisaged have very basic levels of writing, expressions of opinion (Literacy for Public Debate) are not a feature of the curriculum, though learners can be gradually encouraged to write an opinion or two, already expressed in oracy discussions.

Teaching oracy

This approach to oracy development provides opportunities for learners to work through a sequence of actual episodes as if the events were happening to them. They have to analyse what to do and say. If they encounter 'power' along the way, in bureaucracies, they may need to work out strategies and appropriate language to achieve their purposes from encounters.

Oracy from reading

The first use of oracy is to make further meaning from the text, discussing the events and giving their impressions. I encourage learners to guess meanings of unfamiliar words or concepts, and provide explanations when they cannot. We also answer the specific questions that arose in the prediction stage. This discussion can also be directed to 'reading between the lines' for subtle or assumed meaning, tone, and the attitude or stance of the writer.

Oracy for Self Expression

Learners can give oral recounts of the events in the stimulus articles. The events can then be connected to other experiences or 'realities'; learners are invited to recount similar events that happened to them or someone they know.

In addition, the article can also be exploited to allow members of the class to imagine how people of different viewpoints might describe events. For example, how would different characters in the article describe what happened? This activity offers chances to reuse much of the language from the article. They need to choose from a number of possible forms of utterance, depending on who the characters are and how each feels in the context, and alter the sequence and relative importance of parts of each recount.

Oracy for Practical Purposes

The action sequence includes interactions with personnel in a range of institutions and organisations. We build various dialogues, discuss the impact of particular utterances and practise them in a range of contexts. Many long-term residents will be familiar with the kinds of things people typically say in these interactions, and so the dialogue can be built up on a board.

These can be utilised in either of two ways. With learners whose oracy is comprehensible, we can use their life experience to build the dialogue step by step from their utterances, noting the main language items they have trouble expressing, and offering more appropriate alternatives. With learners whose oracy is weak, we can tape conversations with another native-speaker for further use in class. This also allows us to select language items (grammatical points, vocabulary, pronunciation) integral to the dialogue that might need attention in class.

Oracy for Knowledge and Public Debate

The personal experiences may incidentally provide examples of 'oppression or liberation' that can become a source of 'public debate' oracy later in the unit. Some of the articles themselves provide happenings which are ripe for questioning and discussion of 'How could this happen?', which leads to giving opinions, initially in simple grammatical forms:

> 'I think that's a bit strange because . . . '
>
> 'This couldn't happen in my country because . . . '

These can gradually be varied in style and sophistication. Opinions are also expressed by people in the stimulus articles and these can be highlighted. Learners can also be helped to prepare short talks (5-10 mins) to deliver to the class, on their own experience in relation to issues being discussed, describing the relevant 'social system' in the country of origin.

A note on pronunciation

The beauty of working in full contexts is that phonological elements—rhythm and tone (intonation)—can be predicted and delivered quite naturally, because the characterisations and communicative intent are clear. These should therefore be given good mileage in practising dialogues, by establishing emotional aspects of contexts and feelings of the characters, allowing learners to incorporate various roles in dialogue work.

I also make use of reading activities to address phrasing, word grouping for sense, and rhythm and intonation aiming at more natural expression. When asking learners to read text aloud for such activity, we need to be sure they have understood it thoroughly beforehand.

Correction in oracy activities

What, how much, when and how to correct? These questions constitute the eternal dilemma of the ESL teacher. Learners expect language teachers to correct their mistakes; many even demand it. However, through long experience of ESL teaching, I have found that the willingness to be corrected

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erodes very easily in the face of constant correction. There are often so many inappropriate usages, it is not feasible to correct them all, simply because attention cannot be paid to too many things at once. Thus, the challenge is to assist learners to gain greater accuracy, without focusing too directly on the inaccuracies.

Discourse intelligibility

Correction needs to be governed by the philosophy of focusing wherever possible on meaning. Thus, major areas of inaccuracy are defined as those which most hinder the transmission of meaning. By definition, then, problems of discourse development, word order or imprecise vocabulary take priority over other errors of grammatical form, such as omitted redundancies. The use of the language in context helps maintain the focus on meaning and may provide examples of how inaccurate grammar impedes clarity of meaning.

ESL teachers have the habit of seeing through what learners say to perceive what they mean; of making allowances in order to pursue the communication. However, with long-term residents it is important to develop a consistent approach of responding to what is *said*, rather than what is *meant*, in order to highlight the need for learners to alter their utterances to more appropriate forms as well as rewarding the change with different responses when they do alter them.

Two types of oracy activity

Oracy activities need to be clearly differentiated in our minds as to purpose: either as 'transmitting meaning' or 'practising accuracy'. In the former, such as retelling experiences, discussing events or giving opinions, the only on-the-spot correction should be when the meaning is incomprehensible (that is, the utterance is 'unintelligible'). In other words, content is paramount in these activities.

We also monitor oracy for accuracy, making notes of several utterances that could have been expressed differently, more effectively, vocabulary that might have been more precise. These can then be discussed and reworded later in a separate 'practising accuracy' activity.

Approach to grammatical inaccuracies

This leaves the question of what to do about the grammatical inaccuracies and 'redundancies' in student's utterances. These ways of speaking have served them well for years, as they communicated meaning adequately, despite inaccuracies. The forms are now automatic, that is, stabilised. They may find the effort involved in destabilising such ingrained habits just not worthwhile.

Since they are ingrained habits, little is achieved if we focus on them directly in oracy activities, as I have found to my frustration in earlier classes. Therefore, my approach is to focus on them indirectly in reading texts, hoping that the continual visual reinforcement of their presence *may* begin the process of change; that they may begin to make connections and hypothesise for themselves about what is missing in the way they speak. (Still very much a 'perhaps' in my mind.)

Past tense

In oracy activities aimed at 'transmitting meaning', select only one grammatical point that is repeatedly mishandled for later 'accuracy practice'. For example, a favourite of many ESL literacy teachers is past tense. Firstly, past tense forms can be reinforced visually in 'language experience' reading passages. Secondly, they are integral to the recount 'genre' and thus are recycled in each unit. It is wise to begin with the irregular verb forms. This may surprise some people, as they are 'irregular', but many of them are also the most used verbs and thus will reappear constantly. Their past tense form is also more easily heard in speech and noticed in print form (a 'salient' difference, which applied linguistics tells us is more easily perceived).

If you wish to incorporate follow-up activities, the utterances noted can also be used as a writing exercise or copying exercise.

Reflections on an oracy-focused curriculum

In summary, we need to change our traditional language teacher focus from one of 'correctness' to one of 'appropriateness'. The basic consideration should be how comprehensible the whole utterance is in the context of what is being talked about, or the degree to which errors prevent other people from understanding, i.e. intelligibility (see *CGE for Adults*, 1993, pp. 171 - 191).

There is no guarantee that the hoped-for language changes will happen, even after all these activities. We need to lower our expectations then and take heart from the likelihood that students may at least achieve a slightly higher ratio of accuracy or become just a little more intelligible and acceptable. I found it difficult to see the language gains they were making in each lesson, because I was used to seeing much bigger gains with more educated learners in general ESL classes, who were able to make what would be quantum leaps for ESL literacy learners. I had to be more conscious of the fact that only a few items can be transferred at any one time from short-term to long-term memory. So I had to reset my sights to see that for these learners even small gains were proportionately as great and significant as those of the general learners.

The major part of their learning in oracy may comprise less measurable things, like:

- their willingness to participate in interactions that may have defeated them before
- a greater range of topics they are prepared to discuss
- less reluctance to state opinions
- a greater understanding of social and organisational systems affecting their lives in Australia.

The rest of this article takes a couple of examples of actual units of work and goes through a possible procedure with each in detail. The first is unashamedly 'milked' for all it is worth in both oracy and literacy. I would not necessarily expect all the activities described to be taught. Rather, my aim is to show just how much scope there is to use the 'action sequence' approach imaginatively.

Sample unit 1: Exploiting a context in full

The contextual 'social system', in which the first example is set, is that of marriage and family, the most common experience for learners. The stimulus article focuses on an event that may be considered unusual nowadays—a 70th Wedding Anniversary.

Prediction

The pictures and headline should be enough to prompt predictions about what is likely to be in the article. In this case, the main things to highlight:

- the clothes styles in the small photo
- the age of the couple
- their obvious attitude of love in the main photo
- who they might be
- where they live
- when they got married
- children and grandchildren
- the celebration
- what they do with their lives now.

Listening (reading aloud)

The learners now have specific information to seek while listening. I read the text aloud again a couple of times to get more information. We discuss whether their predictions were accurate and what information they obtained. Whatever is missed becomes a 'listening for specific information' activity for subsequent readings aloud.

Reading for matching print and spoken forms

This time with learners following the text (if they are non-readers—see below), I ask them to answer the same questions, but this time in the exact words of the text if any of them can find them. I may also give them a written set of questions to answer in this way.

Language experience reading

We rebuild the article in 'the words of the learner' (see Moraro & McIntyre, 1988, pp. 22-23) and do activities aimed at matching spoken and printed form—word recognition (ibid, pp. 24-29). (If readers are more able, similar recognition activities can be performed using the article itself.)

Writing (copying)

The copying of the complete language experience passage worked on is the next (vital) stage for beginning literacy people, as this will form the core of what they take home with them in their books. I use the time to check their attempts and highlight anything that's missing. I also use the time to make a copy of it myself, usually on overhead transparency, but if there is no machine available, I put it on butchers' paper for further revision opportunities later in the unit. For non-readers, I also record the passage onto cassette.

Teaching point: language elements

Use their own experience, firstly, with an 'accuracy' activity, getting each one to say how long they or their parents (or indeed some long-married friends) have been married. My model sentences are about the couple in the written extract or myself and all must be 'here and now', that is, true for us. For example:

> How long have you been married?
> Do you know anyone who has been married a long time?
> How long have they been married?
> How long have your parents been married?
> How long were they married?
> How long were you married?
> When did you get married?
> Where were you married?

If one or both married partners is now deceased or, indeed, separated or divorced, this provides an opportunity to address four language elements, commonly confused in the speech of 'stabilised' learners: it shows one of the reasons for the use of two major tenses in English—the simple past and present perfect; it begins the differentiation of '*was*', '*were*' and '*did*'; it directs attention to the position of the subject in the question forms; the sequence of questioning can begin the sorting of when to use noun subject and when to use pronoun subject, trying to undo the form 'My parents they have been . . . '—to show that the forms are not random but related to meaning.

Reading for Practical Purposes

I can recycle the skills of reading the street directory. Although this time there is no address, the article includes:

> They live in Monbulk.
> They play bowls at the Monbulk Bowling Club.
> The party was at the Senior Citizens' Club.

These can all be found in a street directory. The last two call for the index and the community listings section.

They also consult the telephone book. Since the full names of the people are mentioned in the article as well as their suburb, it may be possible to find their address and then look up where they live in the street directory.

Reading, speaking and writing

The world map is used by learners to point out where they and members of their families were married (in which town or city). This may require maps of individual countries as well.

They could also conduct a class survey, in which each member asks about each other member, in order to compile a list of the learners and their years of marriage. An additional task may be to rewrite the results in order from longest to shortest, or in alphabetical order.

Grammatical features

The grammatical element from the previous step can be recycled, reporting the results:

(1) X has been married for . . . years.

(2) She/he was married in . . . ?

Or even, if true for any learners:

(3) She/they had been married for . . . when he died.

(4) She has been married for . . . years, but she was married before

These are not just grammatical exercises, they are also interactive ones and can extend to further conversational exchanges, reinforcing appropriate tense use, eg.

(1) Has she really? Do you still love each other?

(Like Harold and Mabel)

(2) Do you still remember it?

(3) Oh? How did he die?

(4) Oh, was she? What happened to her first husband?

Politeness and indirect questions

Another level could be highlighted: the function of asking for personal information, which in this culture is often expressed in a more complex grammatical form—indirect question—for the sake of politeness.

Would you mind if I ask: how long you have been married?

Would you mind if I ask: how he died? ((3) above)

Speaking from Experience(Self Expression)

Returning from learners' own experiences, if anyone has (or had) parents whose marriage reached milestone anniversaries, they can 'recount' how they celebrated or what was significant about the occasion in their memories. Listeners can be encouraged to ask questions for clarification or further information at the end of each recount.

These experience-based accounts can highlight different cultural or social customs (perhaps anniversaries are not celebrated, for example). This can lead to discussion of the differences, as well as being an opportunity to introduce the symbolism of the various anniversaries in Australian culture (50th = gold etc.).

Note, these are 'fluency activities' so I don't correct for accuracy; only things that make the meaning incomprehensible to other learners are flagged. Instead, I note one major or repeating error in the delivery for immediate feedback, when each recount is over.

Writing from Experience (Self Expression)

I find it wise to follow this oracy focus by having learners attempt to write the incident they have recounted. For those who cannot write, I write their recount for them (not all of them each time) at least partially and ask them to copy it for themselves. For non-readers, I will read it onto a cassette for them to take home with the printed version.

Reading for Self Expression

Since I try to take every opportunity for reading activities, learners can then read the incidents written by others. This is both inherently interesting and can also add other possible examples of writing to their own repertoire. Each reader may ask a question by way of clarification, the answer to which must then be incorporated by the writer in the most appropriate place in their text.

Oracy for Practical Purposes—dialogue work

Returning to the core article, I try to imagine interactions that might have taken place in the 'action sequence' of this anniversary, or as suggested by the text, for example:

Face-to-face:

Harold reminding Mabel (or vice-versa) of the upcoming anniversary
The couple greeting each other on the morning itself
Reminiscing with each other about the wedding photo
Describing the wedding photo and event to grandchildren
Their (married) children planning how to celebrate:
    —where they can hold the party?
    —what they will need?
    —how many people and who to invite?
Their children talking to friends about their plans
Invitees discussing what present to buy

By phone:

Ringing to book the senior citizens' hall, checking facilities, requirements:
If family are catering, ringing to dole out the tasks
If it's a surprise party, telling everyone where to park
Invitees ringing to accept or say unable to attend
Neighbours ringing on the day to congratulate them
(Even: previous phone call to them about the birth of the youngest grandchild six weeks ago)

After the event:

Couple ringing family to thank them

Married children talking about the event to friends —

What did you do on Saturday?

How did the party for your parents go?

Predicting the dialogue

First, establish aspects of the context and characters in each dialogue chosen. For example, if the couple married and lived their whole lives in Monbulk, the family would be well known there. This may determine the degree of familiarity and hence the language utterances in phone calls.

For a class activity we chose the son ringing to book the hall for the party. Students told me the details he would be asked for and what things about the hall would be discussed. (This is rather like what is called 'semi-scripting' the dialogue.)

We build the dialogue line by line, learners proffering possible utterances. This gives an idea of how much is known, in the form of appropriateness of utterances as well as grammatical form. (The procedure and treatment is similar to that used in the 'language experience reading' elicitation.)

If a suggested utterance is less appropriate to the context, I nevertheless record it elsewhere, so that later we can discuss a more appropriate context, or how it might elicit a different response, which in turn takes the conversation in another direction—that is, it results in different discourse development. In the example below, we begin by establishing the son's identity, since the family is well-known in the area. Another offered utterance is kept aside as less appropriate for the first dialogue. This is then considered in another dialogue, based on a slight shift in context, to see how the dialogue's discourse development might alter. Here's one example of what might be said in the phone call. The Coulsons' son who is arranging the booking is known to the answerer:

Good morning. Monbulk Senior Citizens' Hall.

Oh hello. This is John Coulson. I'm Harold and Mabel's son.

Oh yes. What can I do for you?

Well, you probably know they're having their 70th wedding anniversary on June 2nd and the family are planning a big party for them . . .

Yes, so I heard.

. . . so we were wondering if the hall would be available.

Can you hang on just a minute while I get the bookings book.

Yeah, sure . . .

Are you there, Mr Coulson?

Yep!

Yes, that weekend will be fine. There's nothing booked for that day. What time are you thinking of?

Oh, we'd like to have it in the evening, if that's OK. Ummm . . . about six?

Yes . . . Just let me write that in. Now, are you catering for it yourselves?

(The call can go on to what facilities are available, the cost, any conditions etc. Hence the importance of thinking through with the learners what aspects need to be covered in the call.)

Now, another, inserting the less appropriate utterance. The son has lived away a long time and doesn't know the answerer:

> *Good morning. Monbulk Senior Citizens' Hall.*
>
> *Hello. I'd like to book the hall.*
>
> *Yes, sir. What is the occasion?*
>
> *Well, my parents are having their 70th wedding anniversary and the family are planning a big party for them.*
>
> *Oh I see. When is it?*
>
> *The second of June.*
>
> *Second of June, OK. Can you hang on just a minute while I get the bookings book.*
>
> *Yeah, sure . . .*
>
> *Are you there?*
>
> *Yep!*
>
> *Yes, that weekend will be fine. There's nothing booked for that day. And who is the party for?*
>
> *Harold and Mabel Coulson . . .*
>
> *Oh, Harold and Mabel. I know them well. And are you their son?*
>
> *Yes, I'm John Coulson.*
>
> *Oh yes, Harold often mentions you.*
>
> *Does he?*
>
> *Yes. What time are you thinking of, John?*
>
> *Oh, we'd like to have it in the evening, if that's OK. Ummm. about six?*
>
> *Yes... Just let me write that in. Now, are you catering for it yourselves?*

Teaching point: language elements

In class we discuss other variations of utterance and likely development. In the second dialogue, what lines would be omitted if the son had said immediately that he wanted to book the hall for his parents' 70th anniversary?

The learners' attempts at building the first dialogue above omit the 'social lubrication' features and some phone-specific discourse features as they are often unaware of their importance. They may forget the arrangements are being made by phone or they may be so involved in building the content. Thus, I might choose these and how they negotiate and facilitate the meaning, as the language focus.

The odd grammatical form of future idea with present continuous form arises during the building of the dialogue:

> *'. . . they're having their 70th wedding anniversary on June 2nd and the family are planning a big party for them . . .'*

and we identify the reason for this: the anniversary and the party are definite and planning is in progress (relating form to meaning). We try to think of events coming in the lives of the learners and what we could say about them, which become sentences for a 'fill the gap' further practice sheet.

Further practice on the dialogue

There are now several possible options for further work:

- providing alternatives for several of the utterances (e.g. '*OK*' instead of '*yeah, sure*')
- emotions of characters in the original interaction can be manipulated e.g. if the senior citizens' person is in an unco-operative mood
- a slight change of context, where one of the learners is having the party for an anniversary of their long-married parents or friends, perhaps at a hall near them, on different dates, . . .
- introducing a difficulty into the first context: the hall is not available on that day, so they have to negotiate another time—or another hall, in which case they can express disappointment and terminate the conversation; or ask if the person knows somewhere else they might try, . . .

(N.B. Let the imagination run riot, if you have time!)

Further Oracy for Practical Purposes

The previous reference to the street directory can be used to give directions on how the couple get from where they live to both the Bowling Club and the Senior Citizens' Club. A more challenging task may be to work out directions for driving from the school to Monbulk, which involves negotiating their way from map to map. An associated task could be how to get there by train, which will involve the decoding of railways and stations.

Oracy for Knowledge and Public Debate

Further discussion topics appropriate to this unit:

Wedding customs, ritual, dress (from the small photo).
Changes from your parents' generation to now.
If you got to Mabel and Harold's age together,
    What would you do?
    How would you celebrate?
    How would you feel?
Why is this event in the paper anyway?
    Is it special?
    Could it be because it's unusual nowadays?
    Divorce and average length of marriage.
Is this a sign of our society breaking down?
    Individual independence *vs* family security/closeness.

It will be seen that these topics expand from the personal, factual, and familiar, to the personal hypothetical, to the generalised, more abstract.

Writing for Practical Purposes

As we now have Harold and Mabel's address, we can send them a congratulatory card. We will first have to buy it, which involves preparing the appropriate dialogue before we go. (In most cases, members of the class can buy it without speaking anyway—self-serve.) We need to read the wording it already contains, then work out what else needs realistically to be written in it. Since Mabel and Harold don't know us, we need to explain who we are, how we came to read about them in the paper and why we are writing to them. We also have to address the envelope and write our address on the back.

Other literacy tasks, appropriate to this unit, might be:

- compiling a list of who to invite to your party
- reading formal invitations, acceptance/inability cards
- composing an invitation to the Coulsons' party
- listing food to be served
- compiling shopping lists
- writing directions to the Monbulk Senior Citizens Hall (after earlier oral work on directions)
- inviting people to a class party.

Within these, it is possible to see the social, cultural and organisational knowledge that is needed. (In one course, it led to writing recipes of food brought for a class party.)

Further Reading

Now I introduce another reading text. (Again, I read it aloud to enable those who can't to enjoy it too.) It may be an associated article providing statistical information on something connected with the main context, for example:

- figures on marriage, divorce etc.
- figures on age ranges for marriage in Australia
- figures on lifespan of men and women in Australia

From these can come further discussion work, especially in comparing with those of their country of origin.

Once again, my eye is alert for possible language elements on which to focus later. In this case, it is likely to be comparative forms themselves which may be unknown or inaccurate (e.g. the use of *more better*; *older for*) or modifiers of 'black and white' words like *old*, *young*, *big*, *small*, *good*, *bad*.

Another article I sometimes use at this stage is entitled: 'Love On The Ferris Wheel'. It pictures a wedding, the man dressed as a woman and the woman as a man—and on a ferris wheel for a wedding! This, of course, prompts lots of discussion, which can easily lead to other personal anecdotes about unusual occurrences at weddings. The agreement on reversal of traditional roles may also be the case with someone they know, as well as ultimately leading to the abstract issue of accepting traditional roles of husband and wife, and attitudes to the changing roles of women and men in the home and in the workforce.

Alternatively, this could be the beginning of another unit, following the stages outlined above.

This comes from an ESL book called *True Stories in the News* (Heyer, 1987). I wish I had come across this book at the start of developing my approach, because it has a number of contexts with an oddity about them, just like the articles I collect. If you have beginning readers, this may indeed be the book for you, because the accompanying texts are presented in simplified form. Unfortunately, the original news texts are not included one reason for continuing to use real-life material.

Concluding the unit

I always make a point of returning to the original article, in the light of the insights and language practice that have taken place during the unit. The point of this is not just to round off the unit: there may still be vocabulary or parts of the original text that learners want to understand and can now have a guess at. Furthermore, it allows us to compare the more formal news language with that of:

- the language experience passage
- their own written recounts
- the spoken language.

An interesting aside: when I found this article, I used it immediately with the class. The unit ended with the learners buying cards, writing in them and actually sending them, as we'd found their address in the phone book (they were the only ones of that name in the area). I wrote an accompanying card to explain. Wonderfully, Harold and Mabel responded gratefully, with a handwritten letter which of course became further reading for the learners. They were really 'chuffed' by this.

Sample unit 2: Focusing on language items

Reports of car accidents appear constantly in the news and can be readily exploited both for oracy and literacy. Everyone knows a car accident, either one they were involved in themselves or one they've heard about. Oral recounts of these personalise the language use.

I use a picture with very short but information-packed text. (News text often packs information into more complex sentences for reasons of space.) It needs 'unpacking' with lots of discussion of:

- how it happened
- how the vehicles reacted to each other
- using the street directory to trace their paths
- where the pedestrian was.

Recounts

The first exploitation stems from the accident itself, with recounts from the different viewpoint of each participant. Language styles (registers) will alter significantly depending on the audience being addressed:

Driver A	talking to another driver
Driver B	talking to friends
Driver C	statements to police
Pedestrian	interviewed by TV.

Tense

The distinction between the simple past and the past continuous, with 'when' clauses, which is integral to the description of accidents, is often not understood or is confused by these learners. For example:

> I **was standing** near the petrol bowser, when this car **hit** it and **knocked** it onto me.
>
> I **was driving** along when I **had** some sort of seizure.
>
> He **ran** into another car, which **was travelling** south.
>
> [and so on].

Learner recounts of their own or other accidents they have experienced will provide ample opportunity for further practice of these tenses.

Prepositions

Another language element, constantly confused by learners, is the use of prepositions. In this case, prepositions of location are integral to reports on the positions of vehicles and collisions, for example:

> driving along, down, up, near the curb, in the left lane, to the corner, at the corner of, near the corner, around the corner, just past the corner in, on, beside, next to, behind, in front of.

Prepositions are very hard to teach via general rules. This approach allows for the particular usages to be seen in real contexts.

Passive voice

Accidents also provide a perfect opportunity to introduce passive voice in a most appropriate context, for example:

> I was hit by a petrol bowser!
>
> The car was damaged.
>
> One pedestrian was injured.
>
> He was treated at St. Vincent's Hospital for minor injuries and allowed to leave.

Complex sentences

The formation of complex sentences can proceed (in reverse) from the initial unpacking of the article, showing how the separate simple sentences can be combined. For example:

> One driver was crossing the intersection.
>
> He collided with another car.
>
> That car was travelling south on Nicholson Street.
>
> The first driver also collided with a stationary car.

> That car was at the petrol station.

becomes:

> '**As one driver** was crossing the intersection, he collided with another car, **which was travelling** south on Nicholson Street and **he collided with** another car **which was** stationary at the petrol station.'

Conclusion

I could go on with other examples but I trust that by now I have made the point that newspaper articles of this nature are of great value in language classes. Finally, although I have not spelt it out in lists, I hope that the integration of the four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) shows clearly through the text of this document.

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From fill-ins to foundations

Changing Views of Literacy

Delia Bradshaw

In this paper Delia Bradshaw reflects on the experience of taking over the teaching of a Basic Education class halfway through the year. The obvious gap between her own approach to teaching and the work the class has done with its previous teacher becomes the focus for Bradshaw's examination of classroom politics. Who is to determine what students shall be offered in a given course? Bradshaw's view is that the Adult Basic Education teacher's role extends to that of a 'guide and initiator into linguistic and conceptual domains most likely never known or initiated without intervention by the teacher'.

Her paper provides a survey of the various approaches to the teaching of adult literacy culminating with the critical social literacy perspective. It then moves on to discuss various sessions in which her new students moved into the realms of debate, uncertainty and controversy which are central to this teaching approach.

Journal Jottings

July 29th

Tomorrow is my first class with the two hours a week Basic English group I'm taking in second semester. I think I'm going to be a bit of a shock for the class because I'm so unlike Barb, their first semester teacher.

When I came to meet the class on the second last week of first semester, I found them all working on separate tasks, physically quite separate from each other, mostly completing grammar and vocabulary exercises from a book called *Activate Your English* (Bartley & Kemeny, 1975).

A textbook

Yesterday, in preparation for getting to know the class better, I took a closer look at this book, hoping it would act as a shortcut to finding out what they'd been doing in class all year. This eighty-seven page textbook, published in Perth in 1975, is organised into three parts. The first part deals with 'Better Words for Everyday', the second is called 'Words for Describing People', and the third specialises in 'Technical Terms'.

As the Contents page gives no page numbers, I had considerable trouble navigating the book. It took me ages to work out its basic structure and pattern. It consists, I now know, of hundreds of 'graded' exercises, organised into Basic and Advanced. Each set of exercises is made up of ten questions, with space provided adjacent to each question where the answer is to be written.

The 'How To Use' Section at the front instructs students to:

1. Take the selected exercise.
2. Enter your answer into the space provided in pencil.
3. Complete all ten questions of the exercise.
4. Check answers from the back pages.

I can't resist reproducing, word for word, some of Exercise No. 1, the first of fifty-eight exercises in Part One.

Part 1. — General Terms

VOCABULARY FOR EVERYDAY USE

1. OBJECTS AND THINGS — (NOUNS)

(a) BASIC

Exercise No. 1

Write down in the space provided the word or phase which has most nearly the same meaning as the first word:

1. EQUIVALENT.
    (a) opposite to
    (b) superior to
    (c) equal to
    (d) inferior to ....
2. FALLACY. An error in
    (a) speech
    (b) expression
    (c) pronunciation
    (d) reasoning ....
3. REVERIE.
    (a) a thought
    (b) a daydream
    (c) deep sleep
    (d) state of mental anguish ....
4. SYNOPSIS.
    (a) a summary
    (b) a narrative
    (c) a description
    (d) a poem....................
5. APPAREL.
    (a) cloths
    (b) clothes
    (c) an error in speech
    (d) a fruit ....

I know I'm going on at some length about this book but it's the best way I know to evoke the ethos of the class I'm about to inherit. Discovering what the book espouses provided me with an instant and picturesque account of what had been occupying the time and minds of the students in this Basic English class for most of the year to date, symbolising powerfully and effectively for me what counts as English for them.

Conceptions of language

While reading the book, I remembered how Barb's 'handover' letter to me had stressed how much they love these sorts of activities. In fact, as proof to substantiate this, she had included samples of the students' end of semester class reviews that she had designed, distributed and collected especially for my benefit. The following comments (or ones like them) occurred again and again: 'I really enjoyed the spelling and grammar', 'I would like to do more grammar exercises', 'I need to do more spelling', and 'We still have a long way to go on spelling, punctuation, tenses, parts of speech, and what words should and shouldn't go together'. Suddenly Barb's advice to me that 'It's important to be very diplomatic with them' takes on something of a sinister ring. Is she cautioning me against rocking the boat, telling me not to disturb the status quo, urging me not to deviate from the safety of workbooks and drill practice?

The challenge of change

I realise this is no simple matter. To challenge, to change, won't be easy for student or teacher. I am mindful of Rockhill's work quoted in Lankshear's article 'Issues in Adult Education' which reminds us that:

> To disagree, or speak with authority, is difficult for women and can be very painful . . . A key aspect of our sexual inscription as women is the care of others, including responsibility for the nurturing, flattering, nonthreatening support of their egos . . . and intellectuality implies authority, the possibility of disagreeing . . . This can be quite terrifying for women, as to disagree, to challenge, runs counter to our desire to be nice, to take care of others, to make things run smoothly. (Lankshear, 1992)

I understand why Barb might have stayed with the familiar and safe. I feel the appeal of doing the same. However, understanding why Barb might have done and said what she did, as well as knowing first hand myself the internal pressure to please, there's still no way I can continue this established pattern of isolated students working their way through self-correcting language exercise books.

Language in context

It's not that I don't see vocabulary enrichment and extension as important elements in language development, indeed they are vital, but I believe this occurs best when achieved in the context of intellectual and conceptual development, in the context of exploring, analysing and critiquing ideas.

For me, English classes, and therefore Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes, are primarily and deliberately about introducing students to, and connecting students with, the widest range of thinking that constitutes and shapes (or has shaped) contemporary society. What matters is learning how texts are constructed, how to deconstruct them, and how to construct and reconstruct them for the purposes of engaging more fully in all domains of private and public life. It is, ultimately, knowing the significance of personal and political stance, knowing what constitutes stance, and knowingly choosing between stances.

Imagining the self in writing

The most precise and eloquent description I've read of what I think ABE work is all about comes from a piece Rob McCormack wrote in which he says that:

> learning to read and write involves being able to imaginatively position oneself in a new and more powerful way. This new discursive position entails subtle but crucial shifts in your relationship to yourself, your cultural heritage, your institutional relationships, your attitude to social policy formation.

I wish I could remember the source of this quote because I'd like to reread the full text. I remember when I first read them some time ago I was so struck by these words that I jotted them down in a notebook I was carrying. My subsequent search to locate where they appeared in public has been to no avail. (However, it has now been published: see McCormack, 1993.)

It's only now, as I sit about to plan tomorrow's first class, that I realise how fundamentally different what I do is from what Barb is recommending I should do, that I see so clearly that what I value, present and encourage are of quite another order. Putting aside the question of the explanation for her counsel, whether it's a reflection of Barb's manifesto as a teacher or whether it's a reflection of the students' limited experience of alternative models of English teaching and what goes for 'proper' English classes, I simply cannot use *Activate Your English* as a blueprint for my work. I see my mission as connecting students to a wider world—a world of other peoples, other cultures, other ideas—not as a custodian of status-quo-defined correctness.

Who decides?

This state of affairs—my knowingly taking a route divergent from that being comfortably travelled so far—brings me at once face to face with the essence of what I consider to be some of the most important and complex issues in our work as ABE teachers:

- What do ABE teachers think students should be learning?
- What do we judge to be 'a good English class'?
- How helpful, confusing or noncommittal are the names (English, Literacy, Basic Reading and Writing) we give our classes?
- Should more attention be given to being more precise in our naming?
- What is our notion of student progress?
- On what value system is it based?
- What images, pictures, visions of this do we carry in our head?
- Are our unconsciously delivered messages and cues more powerful than our consciously delivered ones?

- How much consensus is there on any, much less all, of these? And what about the students' stated needs?
- Who ultimately decides on classroom purpose and content?
- Who ultimately decides what counts for success?

Different points of view

Barb opted for one thing, the students opt for something similar, and I am planning to do something absolutely different. How much more problematic and complicated this question of classroom politics all becomes when I look to all the theorists, policy-makers and researchers who comment loud and long in defence of a whole variety of points of view, and when I think of the hundreds of articles I've read over the years advancing now functional literacy, now cultural literacy, now literacy for personal growth, now social literacy, now critical literacy, each defining literacy according to their socio-political vision.

Before settling down to finalise plans for my first class, I must answer two questions first: 'How do I justify my choices, my educational ideology? What right do I have to this power?' It seems timely, if not imperative, to revisit some of the articles I've read in recent times that have honed my stance, to declare openly which positions excite and inspire me, which ones arouse a hearty 'Yes, that's right', and which leave me grimacing or shaking my head, mumbling 'Oh no, that's quite wrong'. I think I'll change field, mode and tenor for this.

A more formal reflection

What should our students learn?

The topic under scrutiny is the process and rationale whereby decisions are made about which pedagogy should inform ABE classes. When students present themselves for class, they most commonly state that they want spelling, grammar and punctuation. On the other hand, most contemporary teachers determine that what students need is to know key terms and concepts, to be familiar with commonly recurring themes and debates, to be able to articulate a position on issues of concern, especially issues of public concern.

Whose view?

The issue here is to investigate the matter of whose view should prevail, of who should decide class purpose, class content and class activities, and to evaluate the consequences of the view that does prevail. Whilst showing there is no simple theorem for solving this problem of classroom politics, nevertheless I argue for a position that gives primary and ultimate authority to the teacher for determining pedagogical matters.

As a way of analysing this subject, in the body of this paper various definitions of literacy will be sketched, with attention being drawn both to the stance implicit in each definition and to the classroom activities likely to ensue. Consideration will then be given to how these models influence both students' and teachers' expectations and experiences of an English class. In the conclusion, it will be contended that to settle for a literacy that prizes surface language drills and exercises is a barren and mistaken notion of ABE work.

Perceived needs or changing perceptions

I will argue that it is the ABE teacher's responsibility to amplify and redefine students' 'commonsense' understanding of literacy and language development, to expand it beyond a notion of there being a predefined, fixed correct usage to a view that sees language learning as an extension and deepening of their own intellectual realm whilst simultaneously developing a capacity for critiquing all other realms. This conclusion will thus propose that ABE teachers should see their role as going beyond that of merely satisfying students' stated needs to that of a guide and an initiator into linguistic and conceptual domains most likely never known or chosen without intervention by the teacher.

As a prelude to the matter of definitions of literacy, it must be stated explicitly from the outset that, as Knoblauch says in his opening to 'Literacy and the Politics of Education': 'literacy is one of those mischievous concepts, like virtuousness or craftsmanship, that appear to denote capacities but that actually convey value judgements' (Knoblauch, 1990). A decision about which literacy and whose version of literacy is, at root, a decision between contesting political definitions and visions. Literacy is not a neutral denoting of skills: it is always literacy for something—for professional competence in a technological world, for civic responsibility and the preservation of heritage, for personal growth and self-fulfilment, for social and political change.

Functionalist literacy

The most familiar literacy argument comes from 'the functionalist perspective', still copiously represented in books on most ABE shelves such as *Activate Your English* and *Skills of English 1, 2 & 3*. This view, sometimes called effective literacy in government policy papers, sees the ultimate aim of literacy as training people in the minimal reading and writing skills needed, especially those related to technology and the economy, for usefulness in modern society. In English classes, this means lots of attention to accurately filling in forms and proformas, correctly decoding public notices and getting the 'right' answers.

Functional for what?

This conduit model implies that language is value-neutral. What it does not declare, evidenced by its exclusively narrow and mechanistic concentration on skills that fit people to be pragmatically competent at given tasks in predetermined roles, is that the effect of this is to safeguard the socioeconomic status quo. It omits, even outlaws, questioning, interrogating, analysing alternatives. For this literacy, it is important to know how to use a detonator, but it is not important to ask: 'should we be mining here?'. Becoming literate is about accumulating pre-packaged, fragmented bits of language that will, it is believed, make for smoother social lubrication and greater efficiency, without changing the established social order.

This view refuses to acknowledge the values and views of society embedded in it. It fails to take account of the inextricable link between language and social activity, and how intimately they co-exist and define and reinforce each other, the irrefutable findings of decades of research in applied linguistics. It is, therefore, on both rational and epistemological grounds, unacceptable and inoperable.

Cultural literacy

Another common literacy argument is that of 'cultural literacy' in which language is no mere tool but rather a repository of timeless and stable cultural values to be affirmed and preserved, and above all, to be protected from the ever-present possibility of cultural decay that threatens on all sides. In English classes this means familiarisation with favoured cultural texts, norms and practices. This view is most commonly found in debates about the true identity of English teaching that takes place in professional journals such as *English in Australia*, the journal of the Australian Association of Teachers of English, or *Idiom*, the journal of the Victorian Association of Teachers of English, or in the electronic and print media in discussions about the VCE.

Whose culture?

Like the functionalist position, it too is an essentially conservative position, committed to maintaining and promoting the world as it is, opposing any change in the current distribution of privilege and power. It prizes one view of culture and insists this view be the dominant (or only) view, all others, by implication, being inferior. Lankshear in 'Issues in Adult Literacy' quotes Giroux's description of this as 'a unitary Western tradition based on the virtues of hard work, industry, respect for the family and institutional authority, and an unquestioning respect for the nation... dressed up in the lingo of the Great Books' (Lankshear, 1992). It has also been described by Kalantzis in 'Just How Clever? Restructuring, Literacy and Multiculturalism', when referring to Ellsworth's work, as the dominant discourse of 'universal, white, male, European, Christian, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, thin rationality' (Kalantzis, 1992).

Given the multicultural nature of the Australian population and of our classrooms, this educational recipe for homogeneity is an unacceptable model on moral and theoretical grounds. To pursue cultural literacy as interpreted above is to participate in the attempt to devalue, marginalise and undermine those cultures deemed 'non-standard' in the name of developing in students an appreciation of texts as aesthetic, apolitical artefacts that are above, beyond and untainted by political forces such as class, ethnicity or gender, a falsehood linguists and literary critics have long shown to be untrue.

Literacy for personal growth

The 'literacy for personal growth' argument sees language as a means of expressing and exploring personal power, as promoting the progress of society through the progress of the individual learner. In English classes primacy of place is given to expressive writing, personal histories and texts devoted to self-discovery and self-validation, with texts outside the realm of personal self-reflection being relegated to second-class status.

This view is eloquently described by Audrey Grant in the plenary address she delivered to the 8th National Conference of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy in 1984. In that speech, she said: 'The life stories of literacy students in our case study research often suggest . . . stories of fear . . . But there are also stories of change, sometimes minor, sometimes in a major key. Stories where the ability of the telling and the listening move towards wholeness as people, working together in different kinds of learning partnerships, achieve the kind of growth and change that is at the heart of the literacy process.' (Grant, 1987)

Self and social context

Whilst this view advocates liberation for individuals, it refrains from stressing any fundamental restructuring of institutions or power blocs. By implying the self is a discrete, self-regulating, separate world unto itself, it fails to take seriously enough the socially constructed and socially constructing nature of language.

This model favours the world of the self with its preferred forms of reading, writing and discussion around issues of identity. The consequences are that students tend to be relegated to one domain of social life, deprived of access to, and engagement with, the multitude of other texts produced in other such key social domains as industry, unionism, bureaucracy, government, educational institutions and other public agencies. This model, in the long run, can be a disempowering one.

'Genre' literacy

In recognition of the limitations of personal literacy, a more recent literacy argument, here called 'genre' literacy for want of knowledge of a more commonly accepted term, gives primacy of place to the ability to analyse and produce those texts that reside in the sites of power and privilege. Classroom activities focus on identifying, for the purposes of reproducing, the distinctive purposes, structures, linguistic features and generic characteristics of texts found in the public realm, texts largely concerned with instructing, informing, explaining and arguing. An up-to-date state-of-the-art articulation of this position and its social theory of language is *Workplace Texts in the Language Classroom* by Helen Joyce (1992), a publication that 'provides guidance in the teaching of workplace genres within the language classroom'.

The limits of linguistics

Notwithstanding the long-overdue contribution made to literacy practice by the provision of such detailed, textured and technical knowledge of linguistic devices, the territory covered by this model reminds us of other largely uncharted territories waiting to be explored and mapped. Two such areas are firstly a way of dealing with hybridisation, with those texts that intertwine an amalgam of genres rather than a 'pure' form, and secondly the matter of a taxonomy for content description, the need for a more comprehensive framework that provides rich descriptions of the content or discourse of and in texts as distinct from a primary focus on grammatical and linguistic textual features.

Such a taxonomy would acknowledge, name and characterise the presence and significance of socially powerful value-laden ideologies in texts pointing to how they are embedded in common terms and concepts, in recurrent social themes and preoccupations and debates. McCormack's 'How to describe an ABEC Domain' (McCormack, n. d. and 1993) is the only statement I know that urges a movement beyond text reproduction of generic textual forms as the overarching teaching objective to a pedagogy where initiation into meaning is equated with the development of ethical, intellectual, political and social understandings as well as linguistic ones.[1]

Critical literacy

The final literacy to mention is 'critical literacy', a term claimed and propagated by people from diverse points of view, including various combinations and permutations of the last two literacy models mentioned above. The essence of this view is the development of critical consciousness about social conditions, about power/knowledge relationships, about the political dimensions of literacy practices, texts and classroom discourse. The purpose of literacy, according to this point of view, is to analyse social practices so as to contest sites of injustice or oppression, whether in the classroom or the wider society. Classroom activities encourage students to see how every text is the product of a particular set of cultural assumptions, beliefs and values: classroom activities focus on urging students to give resistant readings that challenge the ideology of the text.

The best known advocates are Freire and Kozol overseas, and Luke in Australia, with each of these proposing a unique configuration and emphasis of his own. Luke's final paragraph in 'Critical Research on Textbooks and Literacy' is a full-bodied statement of the sorts of issues concerning those advocating this position:

> Some teachers, researchers and publishers would claim that the battle over textbook 'content' has been waged, and won, and finished–that following the progressive educational innovations of the last two decades, today's textbooks present more balanced, "culture fair" versions of culture, science, gender,

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[1] Since writing this, I have discovered and been thrilled by James Gee's *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology and Discourses* a book that develops an inter-disciplinary approach to studying the ways in which language is inextricably bound up with ideology, with an explanation of why language cannot be analysed or understood apart from ideology.

> indigenous peoples and so forth. In some sites, this might be the case. But the research . . . indicates that the matter is hardly settled . . . What does remain to be explored in far more detail is how the language and discourses of . . . schoolbooks are ideological practices (not contents), products of particular economic and political processes which together with classroom talk and evaluation construct what counts as literacy and informs the literate person. (Luke, 1991)

The critical literacy perspective draws on, and synthesises, aspects of all the other perspectives described by emphasising that literacy is a multi-dimensional and multi-purpose concept and by insisting that being multi-literate necessitates and demands being socially and linguistically critical. It incorporates attention to self and attention to society into a sharply focused conceptualisation of the importance of having a language for talking about language: it foregrounds the importance of knowing in very specific ways how to take and make powerful language.

Experience and pre-conceptions of literacy

It seems a truism to say that all students and all teachers are heirs of, have been influenced by, and are the products of one or more of the five literacy perspectives described above. Notions of what counts for literacy (or English) are largely derived from earlier experiences of schooling, whether recent or in childhood. Given that each of the five literacy perspectives came into prominence and held sway at different historical moments over the last sixty years, with the last two being relatively recent, and remembering that some classes contain students up to the age of seventy-five, it is not surprising that most ABE students, have been shaped by, and associate themselves with, one of the first three perspectives or some combination thereof. Whilst many teachers share this same history and heritage, they also know about the last two, more recently emerged, literacy perspectives.

Whose literacy?

The issue of whose notion prevails, of which literacies or combination of literacies should inform ABE work, only becomes problematic when these are in contest, and choices need to be made. There is no denying that the resolution of this is a quintessentially political matter, a question of who has or who claims power and how that claim is justified. And this is, as in all things political, fundamentally a matter of ethics, a matter of a plan of action or 'shoulds' defended by a set of principles or 'goods'.

The issue raised at the beginning of this essay regarding who determines what goes on in class then comes down to two questions: Is any one of the literacies described in this paper inherently 'better' or more justifiable than the others? Does one emerge as inherently preferable when it comes to fundamental issues such as the roles (and power) it allocates, its definition of the educational task to be done, and the personal and social consequences it engenders?

Teaching and ethics

Given the ethical issues embedded in any answer to these questions, it is essential to declare the ethical framework which is the reference point for the stance taken in this paper. The three ethical principles against which I judge all human endeavour are:

- firstly, its contribution to social justice, that is, the degree to which wealth and power are shared,
- secondly, its contribution towards the creation and sustenance of a healthy world, that is, the degree to which people can live a peaceful and fulfilling life,
- thirdly, its contribution to the storehouse of truth, that is, the degree to which it throws light on life and the human condition.

Thus the only defensible literacy position for me is the critical social literacy perspective.

Critical social literacy

This blended definition of literacy is founded on the premise that being literate automatically incorporates critiquing in the name of truth and justice. At the same time, it sees literacy as a collective enterprise in which the teacher, with specialist knowledge of the intricate interplay between language and social life, is morally and intellectually bound to challenge students' 'givens', to ensure that students not only leave wiser than when they arrived but with an extensive and reliable repertoire of linguistic and hence personal, social and political resources as well. The task of the teacher necessitates redefining and surpassing any limited, impoverished notions of literacy that have shaped and defined students' expectations.

Taking the lead

In short, the Literacy or English teacher as ABE teacher situated within the critical social literacy perspective must, for both moral and theoretical reasons, not only take the lead in deciding class purpose, content and activities, but must do so in the name of the construction of a more just society. Critiquing of discourses must take precedence over correctness of language.

It is this literacy perspective, the critical social literacy perspective, which provides the theoretical framework for the document formerly known as the Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework, more popularly known as the 'blue' and 'pink' volumes or 'The Four Literacies'. This theoretical framework can now be found in the 'Reading and Writing' section of the 'Background Works' in the *Certificates of General Education for Adults* under the heading: Curriculum Model. More detailed references to these documents are made in the Class Activities section in Appendices 1-4 of this article.

Journal (continued)

September 18th

We had our eighth class yesterday. I feel we are making great headway, with only one query about 'When are we going to do parts of speech?'. I have just read the pieces of writing that people handed in on the subject of Aborigines. I feel almost speechless in admiration for what they have produced. They have demonstrated command not only of genre but of the age-old debates that never go away.

Texts we have studied

For two weeks we have studied and imitated a range of texts in class on Aboriginal life:

- a poem, 'The Dispossessed' by Oodgeroo Noonucal (Kath Walker)
- an out-of-date Facts and Figures sheet on Housing, Health, Employment, Prisons and Education
  — a superb opportunity to model interrogating a text, in this case an official-looking and official-sounding document riddled with nonsensical graphics and misleading charts and statistics
- the opening chapter of *From Massacres to Mining* by Janine Roberts
- an extract on black resistance to the white invasion called 'The Australian War of Conquest'
- an Equal Opportunity Board pamphlet called *You don't have to put up with discrimination*
- a video on the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody.

Last week, I asked each member of the class to compose a piece of report writing for homework.

Re-roling the 'I'

When I gave them their homework task, I instructed them to omit any reference to the 'I'—to exclude any mention of 'me' or 'my'—and to write as if they were a historian, an anthropologist, an archaeologist or a theologian. We'd practised report writing earlier on. When discussing casualty wards and accidents, we'd composed a Health and Safety report on the board on a work injury of one of the students and people had extended this by writing a police report, an ambulance driver's report, or an insurance clerk's report for homework. As well, accounts of the coming of whites had been written from both a black and a white perspective.

We'd also discussed what historians, archaeologists . . . do, and how the only way to start writing for this task is to take on that role. We'd talked about how this involves attitudes and values as well as words. With her customary insight, another student, Pina, had commented on how you need to feel self-confident to do that and that she was thinking only the other day about how and why the way she speaks is changing. She said she's embarrassed to think how halting and stuttery and hesitant she had been until recently, what 'dumb' things she had said and how difficult it is to overcome the urge to lecture her friends on (what she now sees as) their slack thinking.

Signs of the sacred

Whilst most of the group seem to be embracing with relish our adventure into the realms of debate, uncertainty and controversy, I fear I might have lost Adrian today. The poem called 'Memo to J.C.' asserts that if Jesus Christ came back today he'd be hard pressed to find a true Christian community, though he'd probably be impressed by how close some Aboriginal communities come to the Christian ideal. Adrian seemed offended not only by this (to him) heretical proposition but also by the colloquial, not-obviously-reverential tone of the poem.

Maybe if I'd left more time for the poem, or, when I saw that time was running short, if I had decided to postpone it till next week, there would not have been the build-up of pressure that haste generates. How to know when it's going to be 'all too much' for any particular student? It's always risky, this business, knowing when and how to introduce counterperspectives, judging the timing so as not to alienate, even lose, any individual.

New language, new discourse, new world view

I keep thinking of Bizzell's article on 'What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College?' in which she reminds us that 'basic writers, upon entering the academic community, are being asked to learn a new dialect and new discourse conventions, but the acquisition of such learning is acquisition of a whole new world view' (Bizzell, 1986). This is a question I would love to study in some depth: what world views do ABE students bring with them? what new world views are demanded of them? and what do they have to give up, and at what price and for what gain, in order to learn (much less embrace) the new world view?

I wish I knew a foolproof way of prejudging which students, when faced with unsettling, disturbing or discomforting knowledge, will hang in there, despite the risks, and which will flee. There's usually one or two in a class who do leave. Maybe their religious views are threatened; maybe they feel it's improper to discuss sex, religion and politics in public; maybe the equation, English = Correct Spelling and Grammar is too deeply ingrained; maybe they feel safe and can cope with a book, but not with questing, questioning adults.

Reflections

Taking a stance

I think this is a particularly complicated matter in the context of a two-hour class where students are somewhat on the fringe of 'returning to study', where they are indefinite about where it all fits into their lives, and where they are still deciding possibilities and priorities. In retrospect, I think I should have started the semester with a discussion of the term 'English', with an exchange of understandings represented in the class and with a declaration of my stance.

Perceptions of correctness

Thinking of timing and pacing, I think I might have been a bit too dismissive of Eileen's question about 'parts of speech'. She is, after all, a near-perfect example of the anxieties created about correctness by the functional literacy school. I always tend to underestimate, in my passionate campaigning for an education grounded in idea-making, how much cultural and emotional weight are still ascribed to superficial factors such as minor difficulties with spelling, decoding and sentence structure, how much people still feel stigmatised and a failure because they can't parse a sentence with speed, accuracy and alacrity. This is exacerbated even more when your 'better educated' children are telling you, as they are sixty-five year old Eileen, that she should be learning the rules of correctness in class. From the sound of them, I think they'd highly disapprove of our discussing sexism, racism, colonialism, and all the other 'isms'.

Following our excursion into Aboriginal Studies, I think it's time to revisit the topic 'Australia is the best country on earth' next week, and build up the argumentative writing we do at the end of class each week when I insist that each person write one sentence on the topic of the day, stating their own point of view and giving one reason why.

What students learn from us

I am firmly committed to this weekly ritual as a way of students' practising taking a stance, but always Foucault's words from 'The Means of Correct Training' are lurking in the shadows: 'The procedures of examination were accompanied at the same time by a system of intense registration and of documentary accumulation. A "power of writing" was constituted as an essential part of discipline.' (Foucault, 1984)

I defend my practice of routinely urging students to declare a position in writing each week by appealing to social justice, but I sometimes wonder how many of my students see me as some sort of missionary, however entertaining and benign, who orchestrates a good performance most weeks. This prickly thought is why I nearly called this document: 'Drill Time, Adult Basic Education or The Delia Show?' Can we ever know the full story of what students learn from us? Probably not, but I've no doubt that the view of literacy we hold as embodied in the literacy practices that we encourage and model are fundamental factors in determining the breadth, depth and power of that learning.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Pattern of weekly class activities

Revision of the previous week	
Introduction to The Four Literacies	• reading and discussion • writing
Discussion of past & forthcoming homework	• speed copying • research • writing
End of class lesson summary & evaluation	• date • texts • activities • what I learnt

Each week of the eighteen-week semester followed a similar pattern or rhythm, as seen in Appendices 2, 3 and 4 in the pages following.

Appendix 2: Week One

ACTIVITY	**RESOURCES**	**RELATIONSHIP TO VICTORIAN ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE, LITERACY & NUMERACY ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK***
1. **Discussion about:** • weekly pattern • folders • organisation/filing of work • organisation of time	Sample folders	
2. **Brainstorming:** SPAIN		Writing for Self Expression & Writing for Knowledge, Levels 2–4.
3. **Composition of 5-line statements about:** S . . . P . . . A . . . I . . . N . . .		
4. **Reading & Discussion of:** 'Happy 500th Anniversary?' • to make connections between the Olympics, Spain, Columbus and the Americas to provide an entree into colonialism in preparation for Aboriginal Studies (More details of this activity are provided in the postscript at the end of this outline.)	*The World Times*, Vol. 1, No 2. Dictionary Globe Atlas Maps	
5. **Discussion of Homework:** • speed copy TWT article • mark Barcelona, North America, Central America and South America on a world map • write a piece entitled 'Gold' (This piece of free writing will provide an introduction into 'The Four Literacies' next week.)		Reading for Knowledge & Reading for Public Debate, Levels 2–4. Reading & Writing for Knowledge, Levels 2–4. All Writing Domains.
6. **Class Summary & Evaluation:** • date • precis of activities • what I've learnt		

[* Note that many of these classroom activities can also be mapped onto the Oracies within the Oral Communication Stream of VAELLNAF—Eds.]

Appendix 3: Week Six

ACTIVITY	RESOURCES	RELATIONSHIP TO THE FRAMEWORK*
Revision of previous week: • 'Letters to the Editor' on the Australian flag	*Herald Sun* & *Age*	Reading for Knowledge & Reading for Public Debate, Levels 2–4.
Writing • complete the following sentence in three different ways: 'Australia is the best country on earth because...'		Writing for Public Debate, Levels 2–4.
Discussion: • 'best' from whose point of view?		
Reading and Discussion: • 'The Dispossessed'		Reading for Self Expression & Reading for Public Debate, Levels 2–4.
Completion of Table: Before White Colonials What White Colonials Brought Results for Native Australians	Oodgeroo Noonucal's (Kath Walker's) poem	Reading and Writing for Knowledge, Levels 2–4.
Reading and Discussion: 'The Australian War of Conquest'		Reading for Knowledge & Reading for Public Debate, Levels (Modules) 2–4.
Comparing the poem & the historical account: • contents • purpose • text structure • language features	A historical article from *Walk in My Shoes: A Social Justice Resource Book*	
Discussion of Homework: • speed copy the history article • find a book on Aboriginal life before the white invasion • compose two historical pieces from different points of view, one to be called 'The Discovery of Australia', the other 'The White Invasion'		Writing for Knowledge, Levels 2–4.
Class Summary & Evaluation		

[* Note that many of these classroom activities can also be mapped onto the Oracies within the Oral Communication Stream of VAELLNAF—Eds.]

Appendix 4: Description of a Week One activity

Discussion of 'Happy 500th Anniversary?'

Happy 500th Anniversary?

1992 is a special year for Spain. Last month World Expo opened in the city of Sevilla and has attracted tens of thousands of tourists and business people from all over the world. In July, the Olympic Games will be held in Barcelona and this will draw more attention to the country.

1992 is also an important year for Spain because it is the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas. At the moment there are dozens of new books being written about the event and three big multi-million dollar films being made about the explorer.

However, many people in the Americas feel less than excited about these celebrations. It is easy to tell this history of 'discovery' from a European point of view. The native people of the Americas see this history differently.

First of all, Columbus was no harmless explorer. He mainly went to the Americas in search of gold and had no problem with the idea of slavery. Columbus even forced the Taino Indians of Hispaniola to bring him an ounce of gold every three months. Those people who did not had their hands chopped off!

From 1492 until now the rich nations have drained the continent of its natural wealth, destroyed much of the environment, and left native people in the Americas among the poorest in the world.

Text as multi-generic and multi-discursive

'Happy 500th Anniversary?' is an article from *The World Times vol. 1, no. 2*, a newspaper produced especially for ALBE students on world issues. This article presents a native American perspective of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas. Like so many texts, it is both multi-generic and multi-discursive. I considered it suitable for both Reading for Knowledge and Reading for Public Debate as it weaves background 'factual' information and strongly worded arguments (the Subject Matter/Language/Structure strands), moving from the 'voice' of the 'objective' reporter to the 'voice' of a passionate pro-native American advocate (the Tone strand).

Levels of text difficulty or levels of reading skill

Given the range of literacy abilities in the class, the reading activities I planned and encouraged spanned those described as desirable outcomes in Levels 2, 3 and 4. I am a firm believer that texts cannot be labelled as Text 'Level-Such-and-Such': it is what is expected of students, what is done with texts, that accounts for the levels.

Classroom reading and discussion activities focused mainly on increasingly sophisticated ways (as described in the Competence Statements and competencies) of identifying the main idea, recognising the basic text structure, recalling and connecting with own prior knowledge on the subjects mentioned, distinguishing between 'information' and 'opinion', describing and judging the writer's standpoint and expressing and defending own standpoint (the Comprehension and Critique strands).

Key questions for organising reading and discussion activities, and the later writing activities, included:

- Why is there a question mark in the headline?
- Why is 'discovery' in inverted commas?
- What does the term 'native people' mean?
- Why is 1992 special for Spain?
- How might native Americans see Columbus's arrival?
- How does this differ from the European point of view?
- How was the environment affected?
- How could the writer's claims be checked?
- How do the first two paragraphs differ from the last three?
- What is the writer's stance, and how can you tell?
- What language devices are used to achieve this effect?
- Can you think of similarities between Columbus's arrival and Cook's?

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Different angles

Thinking through the four literacies

Rob McCormack

In this background article McCormack seeks to show that 'the four literacies' of the Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework (VAELLNAF) can be used as a tool for thinking and reflecting about Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE), as well as a reporting framework for systems of administration.

He first defines literacy as 'more than just cracking the code'; then glances at the way this extended definition of literacy as 'participating in forms of life' unsettles the relationship between literacy and oracy. He then takes up the main task, which is to open up a number of different angles on the four literacies.

The four literacies

To say that Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) includes four literacies is to say that four forms or regions of answerability and accountability traverse the ALBE field, four vectors or horizons of answerability. I will sketch them quickly for you.[1]

One horizon foregrounds the **personal identity** formation of our students, their sense of themselves as agents of a sociocultural narrative, their sense of the connections between different phases of their lives and their present capacity to speak to, on behalf of, and from within their lives. It is within this context that issues of sexual, cultural, social, and class difference are picked up. We could think of this horizon of Self Expression as converging with the horizon encompassing the themes, concerns and purposes of 'subject English' in schools.[2]

A second horizon points to the production and distribution of **modern forms of knowledge**. Here we are concerned that ALBE begins to introduce students to the discursive forms of modern knowledge. This will include learning to read and write expository and textbook prose. Here we envisage ALBE educators developing diverse curricula that begin to apprentice students into the discursive forms and practices of such subjects as History, Sociology, Biology, Legal Studies, Cultural Studies, and so on.

The third horizon embraces the diverse understandings and competencies required to engage with contemporary **organisations and institutions**, especially those of the workplace. Here we are trying to include those competencies covered by 'functional literacy', and to acknowledge that modern life is fundamentally shaped by abstract organisations, bureaucracies and structures, institutions that depend more on written communication than face-to-face presence.

The fourth horizon concerns **citizenship** or what we could call the horizon of the polis. This horizon tries to foreground the fact that modernity also contains a horizon or project specifiable as democracy. This horizon articulates the right and duty of contemporary individuals to contribute to the public discourse which is continually questioning, resisting, proposing and counter-proposing our communal activities, policies and ways of life.

However, in proposing four literacies there is no suggestion that they should be insulated from one another. Quite the opposite. The point is precisely that they are all implicated in one another. If there is one point that everyone associated with this project agrees on, it is that no ALBE program should frame itself in relation to only one literacy horizon.

Naming what happens in ALBE classrooms

The four literacies in the Framework are not meant to impose new forms of teaching and learning on ALBE. Rather, positing four literacies is a way of trying to capture the full range of ALBE literacy practice more explicitly.

Of course, no classification is innocent. As literacy practitioners, we are deeply sensitive to the consequences of naming: most of our students suffer from being 'called names'—names wield as much power as sticks and stones. Modern power is exercised as much through language as through physical force. Power not only comes out of the barrel of guns, it also comes out of the discourses governing what people and things are called and count as.

Unquestionably much of the pressure for explicitness about ALBE classrooms comes from the efforts of governments to 'represent' the interests of tax-payers, business and the general public in accounting for the efficient and effective expenditure of public moneys. However, this is not the only source of pressure for more explicitness: many educators within the ALBE field itself are also concerned to develop more explicit ways of describing what transpires in their classrooms.

However, a continuing issue is whether a common language can be found that captures the concerns of both governments and educators. As a rule, educators find 'the language of government' reductive and alienating, while government typically finds 'the language of educators' vague, elusive and unquantifiable.

At present, most English-speaking governments have (im)posed the 'language of competencies' as a common framework and vocabulary for mediating between educators, bureaucrats and their 'clients'. However, it is doubtful that this vocabulary of competency can be made 'to stick' in the long term. Using the four literacies to think about these matters, we could say that the notion of 'competence' is an attempt to interpret all four literacies in terms of just one of them: Literacy for Practical Purposes.

Already, there has been a backlash against this reductiveness: Conservatives have brought Literacy for Knowledge back into focus with their advocacy of 'cultural literacy'[3]; radicals have invoked Literacy for Public Debate with their concept of 'critical literacy'; and postmodernism has revived Literacy for Self Expression by emphasising issues of identity and the 'differences' of class, gender, race and ethnicity.

If this is correct, the next 10–15 years in education is going to focus around the struggles and negotiations between these four forms of literacy, these four forms of selfhood, these four forms of social engagement, these four forms of activity, these four purposes, these four forms of accountability, these four forms of judgement. By construing ALBE as a region of education answerable to *all four* literacies, ALBE becomes a significant social site where these four versions of life can engage in a continuing conversation about how to relate to one another and to life, about how they shape different names for life and thus shape life itself;—hence the importance of 'names'; hence the importance of language and literacy.

But what is literacy anyway?

In the Curriculum Model for the Reading and Writing Stream, literacy is construed as: *the ability to engage in the contexts, texts, occasions and forms of activity associated with written language*. Learning to be literate is learning ways of reading and writing that embody the forms of interpreting, understanding, talking, thinking and feeling associated with these contexts, texts, occasions and activities. Literacy is participating in forms of life and social activity. There are ways of knowing and living associated with written texts: to learn literacy is to learn to engage with these ways of knowing and living.

More than cracking the code

Notice how this view of literacy extends the common notion of literacy. Usually literacy is taken to mean simply learning to crack the alphabetic and grammatical code, as if once you knew how to decipher individual words and sentences you would then be able to read any book published in that language. But we know that there is more to reading and writing than this.

Although not excluding this level of decoding and encoding, the Curriculum Model for Reading and Writing tries to be more explicit about the *who*, the *why*, the *when*, the *where*, and the *what* of literacy as well as the *how* of reading and writing. It attempts to spell out: the contexts (the *where* and the *when*), the participants (the *who*), the motives (the *why*) and the content (the *what*) of literacy. It tries to integrate the notion of literacy as 'mastery of a written code' and literacy as 'participating in occasions featuring written texts'.

Oracy as literacy

Also, notice that I have included 'talk' within literacy education. This is because 'literacy' is not defined as 'knowing the written code of English' but as 'participating in the activities associated with written text'. Learning to talk about written texts, their contents, their structures, their elements, their intentions, and their strategies is central to any literacy education. As Jay Lemke points out:

> When we approach written text, we need to be able to do more than just decode letters to sounds. We need to be able to *make sense* of the text, to read it meaningfully, with the voice of interpretation. To comprehend it, we need to be able to paraphrase it, to restate it in our own words, and translate its meanings into the more comfortable patterns of spoken language.[4]

In this sense, Oracy is often an integral aspect of the 'literacy practices' of literate forms of life. Learning to talk to, about, around, and against written texts and their meanings is at the heart of literacy.[5] In fact we probably all know the individual we would want to classify as 'literate' even though his or her 'ability to read and write' is minimal. This is because such people can participate in the discourses and occasions associated with literate culture, even though their actual 'text processing' capacities lag far behind. As Olson and Astington point out:

> we must construe literacy more generally than simply identify it with scribal competence . . . . To be literate, in this sense, is to be competent to participate in a certain form of discourse, *whether one can read and write or not.*[6]

Angles on the Four Literacies

Until now I have been using phrases such as: 'contexts, texts, occasions and forms of activity associated with written language' or 'forms of selfhood, . . . forms of social engagement, . . . forms of activity, . . . purposes, . . . forms of accountability; . . . forms of judgement' to describe what literacy is. In the rest of this article I would like to go slowly through some of these different angles on literacy. I will use them as a way of approaching literacy and try to notice what each perspective allows us to observe and what it hides. Each angle will foreground some aspects while backgrounding or overlooking others. Hopefully, by 'trying on' a range of ways of seeing literacy and its meanings we can develop a richer sense of what we are engaged in as ALBE educators.

Basically the problem in spelling out exactly *what literacy is* is that we are at an interface between two equally elusive things—textuality and society, or in more familiar terms, language and life—two things that are difficult to hitch together into a single schema. Nor is there a settled vocabulary for saying how they do fit together. Should we talk about: contexts, activities, registers, genres, discourses, institutions, aspects of activities, forms of life, language games, dispositifs, locales, chronotopes, social imaginaries or domains?—all terms invented by theorists specifically to weave language and life into a single cloth.[7]

I will now explore a few of these angles for describing the four literacies.

Institutions

One way of approaching the notion of four literacies is by looking at the way these literacies capture or acknowledge *the diversity of institutions offering ALBE*. Institutions differ in their governing orientations, motives or purposes, so one way of looking at the four literacies is to look at the way they mirror the range of institutions in the ALBE field and their agendas.

Although literacy is mainly associated with formal education institutions, this has never been true of adult literacy. Adult Literacy and Adult Education have typically scratched together a shadowy life on the fringes of mainstream educational institutions—on the margins, in the marshes. As a result, today we find a range of institutions offering ALBE: prisons, neighbourhood houses, community groups of various sorts, private industry, private providers, Skillshares, English Colleges, TAFE Colleges.

This institutional diversity is vital to the future of ALBE. Although ALBE is in transit from the margins to the mainstream, it is crucial that we retain this diversity of institutional sites and settings. If ALBE simply becomes 'school' for adults it will soon end up domesticated, ineffectual and lifeless. To keep faith with its commitment to the poor and disadvantaged, ALBE must continue to insinuate itself into workplaces, caravan parks, high rise housing, shop fronts, women's refuges and the streets as well as formal educational settings.

So, how do the four literacies deal with the different orientations, motives and horizons of these different institutional sites and settings? One way of making this connection between literacies and institutions would be to divide institutions into four types according to their principle orientation or agenda and see if this can be lined up with the literacies.

Crudely, the four kinds of institution would be:

- modern bureaucratic organisations such as government services and workplaces
- local community organisations and grass roots groups
- organisations intent on participating in and shaping social and political policy
- educational institutions.

Adopting this angle on the four literacies we would say that: Literacy for Practical Purposes acknowledges the range of work sites offering ALBE; Literacy for Self Expression acknowledges Community Centres and Neighbourhood houses; Literacy for Public Debate acknowledges ALBE offerings located within organisations intent on achieving social justice such as work with homeless youth or in Koori communities; Literacy for Knowledge acknowledges educational institutions such as TAFE Colleges, the CAE, and private providers to the Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE).

INSTITUTIONS OFFERING ALBE

- workplaces
- community support groups
- community action groups
- formal education sites

Course focus

However, it is important not to assume that each institutional site offers ALBE courses focused only on its own institutional agenda or horizon. If we confuse institutional sites and the orientation or goal of ALBE courses we might think that worksites should only be involved in work-focused courses, that community settings will only provide offerings focused on personal and community development, or that educational settings will only offer courses focused on academic knowledge.

But institutional sites and courses are not the same thing. For example, a workplace site can offer not only vocationally focused ALBE, but also personal development or political education or bridging into further education and retraining. The same applies to all the other sites: a community house can offer not just courses that enhance self-esteem and confidence, but also courses for political awareness, vocational training or returning to study.

And because personal life, work life, intellectual life and political life are now all inextricably intertwined, there is a serious question for any site about which types of courses will best achieve even its own goals or agenda. For example, it may be that the best thing a worksite could do to increase its productivity would be to help its workers feel more politically and personally engaged. It may be that for a community site the best way to improve people's confidence and self-respect would be to offer them a vocational course so they have saleable skills. It may be that a TAFE College should offer courses based on serious long-term community action projects as a way of reducing the alienation and abstraction of academic knowledge. And so on.

Differences between course focus and institutional site

Another way of making this point about the difference between *course focus* and *institutional site* is to say that all large contemporary institutions now contain significant internal diversity and differences. Modern organisations are finding it harder to stay oriented to just one agenda. Since the excesses of the 1980s, even for business organisations the dollar is not necessarily the only bottom line. Institutions are no longer clean Fordist hierarchies in which every Section or Unit or activity within the organisation can be mapped directly onto a single overriding purpose.

Just as the 1980s saw the mapping of the values of efficiency and effectiveness onto institutions primarily oriented to social justice, so too in the 1990s there is going to be increasing concern about the social justice, cultural and community effects of all institutions. These issues are particularly brought into focus by the struggle for improved conditions of women in the workforce, for child-care, for suitable conditions of part-time work, and against sexual harassment.

In other words, we could say that modern forms of organisation will have to acknowledge the cultural, political, and social agendas of their staff and clients virtually for the first time. ALBE classes will inevitably—willingly or unwillingly—be involved in this reworking of the culture of modern institutional life.

		INSTITUTIONAL SITE			
		work sites	support groups	community action	education sites
COURSE FOCUS	practical purposes				
	personal expression				
	knowledge				
	public debate				

Genres

Another way we can think about the four literacies is in terms of genre. The basic idea here is that there are relatively conventionalised ways of reading and writing and that these ways have evolved into particular formats which are adapted to their different social contexts and purposes.

Memos and manuals

Two genre clusters are associated with *modern organisations and their functioning*. The documents in one cluster—memos, forms, reports, minutes, various business letter formats and so on—have evolved for *transacting the roles and responsibilities* of modern organisations and institutions. Their very format highlights: who (institutionally) is being addressed, who (institutionally) the writer is, the topic, references to previous correspondence or communication, and the date. The body is usually 'short and to the point', containing very little elaboration by way of explanation or illustration; neutral language is used thus repressing any emotional, intellectual or political investment; and finally, an action or response is usually suggested or requested. Everyone involved in such writing is aware that these written texts will be filed and retained as a permanent record documenting that particular institutional transaction. Grouped in the other cluster are the manuals, procedures and instructions focused on *telling people how to* adapt to the frequent changes in modern technologies, institutional routines and spatial locations. These tend to be highly stylised into sequences of actions listed as dot points. They are characterised by an impersonal direct use of the imperative that, in the English language, would in any other context be considered either impolite or offensive; very little explanation; regular use of diagrams or other visual aids to clarify; supplement or replace language; and, in longer texts such as street directories or computer manuals, there are highly developed indexing systems for locating specific bits of information.

Literature and personal writing

Genres associated with expressing *personal experience and responses* are quite different. Here we find personal letters, poetry, diaries, journals, storytelling and novels. Uniting this cluster is the notion of narrative which emphasises the particulars of experience and context. These genres are adapted to articulating human experiences and action. Narrative, whether fictional or 'real', is a way of articulating the patterns and lines of continuity in the multiplicity of experiences, meanings, conflicts, social relationships and life circumstances we all live through. Narrative is thus a way of disclosing the personal and cultural history shaping our modes of engaging with events, others, situations, and life itself.

Academic essays and textbooks

The third set of genres are those associated with *formal education* such as academic essays and textbooks. These genres are fundamentally structured in order for participants or would-be participants in disciplines of knowledge to display their mastery of the theories, concepts, problems and paradoxes of modern knowledge. Typically these genres rely on a rhythm of abstract point followed by elaboration in the form of illustration or explanation before moving on to the next point; a rhythm that demands a highly nominalised grammar, especially at the points of transition between topics or between steps within an explanatory sequence. Finally, these genres usually demand that writers articulate and defend a particular position and reach (logocentric) closure in defending this stance in the face of other legitimate stances within that particular discipline or field of knowledge.

Editorials and current affairs

The fourth set of genres are those associated with *modern policy formation and political debate* such as editorials, newspaper columnists, talkback radio, current affairs programs, letters to the editor, parliamentary debate and so on. What characterises these genres is that they are dialogic and thus usually acknowledge the existence of competing points of view whilst arguing for their own view. Implicit in many of these genres is the notion that modern community is a field of praxis and that 'what is to be done' should arise out of consensual understandings.[8]

GENRES

memos & instructions etc

journals etc

letters to the editor etc

academic essays etc

Communicative purposes

Another way of thinking about the literacies is to see them as four underlying purposes of communication. Although our talk, reading and writing all serve many specific purposes, they can be clustered into four larger purposes.

One purpose of communication which is especially manifest in everyday conversation is what we could call *mutual disclosure*. This form of communication is principally concerned with generating intimacy, trust, friendship, empathy and insight into personal histories and motives. It is a form of communication in which as a rule women excel compared with men.

Another purpose of communication is conveying *procedural information concerned with 'how to do things' or 'how things are done'*. Because modern societies are complex and changing rapidly, dealing with modern organisations or technologies often means learning new know-how. The huge explosion of brochures, instruction pamphlets, operating manuals, signs and so on are all ways by which modern organisations try to instruct their workers, clients and the general public about their (continually changing) procedures and routines. In traditional societies this form of communication was not so prominent—practical know-how, which possessed a far longer 'shelf-life' than modern know-how, was handed on through practical demonstration and imitation.

A third underlying purpose of communication is for a community to engage in *discourse to and about itself*. All societies have special occasions or sites for renewing their sense of themselves, their traditions, their pasts and futures. In modern societies this form of communication which addresses the whole community usually takes the form of debate.[9] This is because modern societies are fundamentally diverse and thus any public utterance necessarily aligns itself as in favour of or opposed to other points of view and social positionings. In this sense we can think of a modern society as consisting of many different local communities and cultures, each with its own local public domain—women's communities, gay communities, ethnic communities, Koori communities, financial communities, neighbourhood communities, professional communities and so on. Yet each of these local communities must at some point enter into debate and dialogue with other communities. This dialogue between different forms of life all coexisting within the same social space we could call politics.

A fourth underlying purpose of communication is *developing knowledge and understanding*. Knowledge and understanding are different from 'information or know-how'. Knowledge and understanding mean being able to engage with, reflect on and criticise the underlying principles, concepts or theories behind our thinking, actions and cultural life. Typically, this will take the form of initiation into traditions of knowing carried by fields, disciplines or subjects. Traditionally, thinking about the underlying meanings of a community or culture was the preserve of a small religious or intellectual elite who often employed a special language such as Latin, Arabic, Sanskrit or Mandarin for this task, a language divorced from the vernacular used in everyday life.

COMMUNICATIVE
PURPOSES

developing relationships
getting things done
debating differences
developing knowledge

Communicative horizons

Another way of thinking about the four literacies is to think of four horizons of *answerability*. What this means is that any act of communication—any text, spoken or written—is answerable to four sorts of evaluation or judgement. Thus any text at one and the same time enacts institutional roles and exercises power; creates interpersonal relationships with its audience; draws on background theories, concepts, and understandings; and projects a vision or picture of the community as a whole.

Now the interesting thing about this is that genres as routinised text formats have evolved and become specialised precisely in order to *evade* this multiple answerability. For example:

- the information and 'how to' instruction sheets put out by bureaucracies and organisations do not explain or even acknowledge the background theories or political imperatives they are drawing on.
- casual chitchat is often a way of temporarily hiding the fact that those involved represent conflicting social interests.
- academic genres usually forbid one bringing in personal experience or spelling out institutional or political implications—thus hiding the way that knowledge is inextricably intertwined with personal meaning and institutional power.
- genres in the public arena often hide the personal investment or stake of participants.

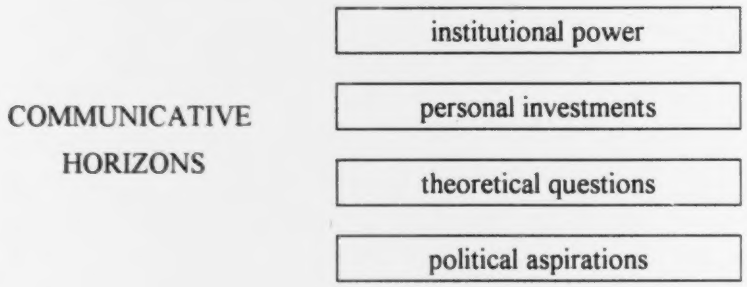
We can see here the danger of a language and literacy pedagogy that confined itself to teaching genres as ritualised modes of communication.

Horizons as vantage points for reading from

It is at this point that it is important to foreground literacy as practices of reading, not just writing. The four horizons of accountability are in fact four forms of reading, four background contexts against which to interpret a text, four ways of bringing a text to account. We could put them in terms of four questions: what institutional power does a text invoke? what personal investments does it realise? what theoretical positions does it invoke? what political aspirations does it carry?

Competent adults must be able to interpret any text from all these perspectives. This will often mean unearthing the implied, the assumed, the concealed, the hidden—no wonder literacy is not just being able to decode the letters!

However these forms of reading are not simply a matter of asking abstract questions of a text such as: who? for whom? what for? on behalf of whom or what? and so on. Reading against the grain depends on a reasonably systematic initiation into the relevant organisational imperatives, personal relationships, theories and political positions. It is then against this background or *prior knowledge* that adults can interpret the institutional, interpersonal, theoretical and political meanings of a text.



Social domains

Another way of thinking about the four literacies is to think of them as the reading and writing practices used in four different and distinct domains or sectors of social life. This involves carving modern life up into four regions—home life, work life, community life and intellectual life.

Home life is a region which focuses on personal relationships; work life focuses on getting things done; community life focuses on social and political interests and purposes; while intellectual life focuses on abstract or 'higher' ideas and meanings.

This way of thinking about modern societies has been prominent in social theory. Basically the story goes something like this: in the old tribal days these domains were not separated out, so every action or aspect of social life served multiple ends. Thus killing a pig could simultaneously:

- propitiate the gods
- cement community relations

- renew the ecological cycle
- initiate the young into tribal stories, rituals and skills.

Modernity as the development of distinct domains
However, with the development of modern societies these different aspects of activities have become separated out and positioned as the responsibility of distinct institutions or domains:

- **the modern nuclear family** separated off from the older extended family, thus intensifying a focus on individuals and their emotional investment in personal relations
- **workplaces** separated themselves off from other social sites so they could be functionally organised into a division of labour by capitalists bent on optimising surveillance and efficiency
- **political institutions** developed their own specific processes, procedures and forms of representation
- **modern research and educational institutions** developed as specialised vehicles for discovering, documenting, disseminating, and handing on knowledge, culture and skills to the next generation.

Modernity as separate domains; postmodernity as permeable domains
According to many social theorists, these different institutional domains have developed their own internal dynamic and momentum to such an extent that we should not even talk about 'society as a whole'. Modern society, on this view, consists of distinct institutions or sectors forced to cohabit with one another even though they have almost nothing in common, and find it very difficult—some would say, impossible—to talk to one another. However, as we have already noted, precisely what is at issue as we enter the late 1990s is the permeability of these boundaries between spheres or domains of social life. The debates between modernism and postmodernism focus around this very issue.[10]

The four literacies have been framed in such a way that ALBE can participate in these debates, or rather, can be a site in which these debates take place. In other words, the writers of the Framework have tried not to pre-empt this debate by secretly aligning it with either modernism or postmodernism. It is clear, however, that the thinking behind the Framework represents a refusal to frame literacy in terms of a simple opposition between personal meaning and institutional demands, between concrete meaningful creative action and abstract social rituals, between the individual and society.[11] This humanist schema—which has framed much past thinking and theorising about literacy—no longer seems helpful in trying to articulate the range, conditions and relationships between social roles and forms of subjectivity available to individuals at the end of the 20th century. ALBE will be a key site in which these issues of 'how separate or blended things are or should be' will be discussed, worked through and practically enacted.

SOCIAL DOMAINS

work life

family life

community life

cultural life

Student goals

Another way of thinking about the four literacies is to think of them as student goals. What motives or goals do adults have for attending ALBE courses?

- some want to further their work prospects—either to improve their chances of getting work or to learn the literacy skills they need for handling a new position or restructured workplace
- others want to develop themselves personally
- others want to engage more in community and social life
- others wish to take up further study or training.

Of course these motives are not mutually exclusive—it is a matter of emphasis, but they influence how adults respond to ALBE offerings. Students mainly interested in learning practical work skills may find little relevance in discussing abstract ideas, exploring personal attitudes or learning academic forms of thinking. By contrast, adults intent on ALBE as a 'second chance' may find a focus on everyday functional communication disappointing: they would rather learn History than learn to write resumés.

However, although important, student goals must not be taken as the only determinant of ALBE courses. In the past, Adult Education tended to take adults motives at face value in the name of 'catering to students' expressed needs'. However, in recent times this smorgasbord approach has been rethought. To take a simple case: youth, especially males, are often very practically oriented. They think of work as physical work, as something you do with your body. So, they think of education and training as a matter of learning how to physically manipulate and deal with tools, machines, and physical processes.

Yet the shift to a more high tech. industry and towards a more service oriented economy means work is becoming less a matter of physical skill and more a matter of social and intellectual skill. The ability to get along with others, the ability to work co-operatively in discussions and teams, the ability to empathise and understand others, the ability to systematically develop a new range of understandings—all of these are now crucial workplace skills. It is this shift in the nature of work that the Mayer Report has attempted to address, a shift that may be invisible to young males whose main sense of agency lies in the skilled fluent use of their bodies as tools or instruments.

ALBE teachers running a course for such youth should structure their curriculum so that it begins with the students' perceptions of their needs and the workplace but then gradually grafts on new perceptions and understandings. 'Starting from where students are at' does not mean 'leaving them there'.

STUDENT GOALS

- to gain vocational skills
- to develop a richer sense of self
- to engage in the wider world
- to return to further study

Literacy pedagogies

A final angle for thinking about the four literacies is to think of them in relation to four pedagogies that have historically formed ALBE.

Functional literacy

One pedagogical strand informing ALBE can be traced directly to the military. Since World War I there has been concern over the literacy of conscripts entering the military. As warfare became more technological the need for literacy increased. But the form of this literacy is quite specific—it is what is often termed *functional literacy* or *procedural literacy*. It is the forms of reading and writing needed to locate and interpret manuals, procedures, instructions and to provide information via formatted forms and standardised reporting forms within hierarchically structured organisations. Much of the research into Adult Literacy in the USA, for example, is still conducted by (and for) the military. In Australia, on the other hand, the military has been less dominant in defining our field—Essay question: Diggers don't like hierarchy. Discuss!

However, because *industry and modern governments* use the same styles of organisation and technology as the military, it is no surprise that industry and governments also focus their concern principally on functional literacy. Governments want subjects who can conform to the bureaucratic routines and processes crucial to modern government: subjects who can fill in census forms, tax forms, vote forms, enter into contracts and so on.

Thus, functional literacy is a *minimalist version of literacy*. It is the literacy needed to survive the everyday reading and writing tasks associated with modern bureaucratic organisations and high-tech. tools and technologies. As Mikulecky and others have pointed out, functional literacy does possess its own specificity—reading technical computer manuals *is different* from reading novels.

However, we should take functional literacy a stage further by tipping it over into the other three literacies. Thus, we should also teach students how bureaucracies function, how to assert their rights and entitlements or complaints, and how to take advantage of bureaucratic processes rather than simply remain victims of the 'front counter'.

Personal growth literacy

Another pedagogy underpinning our teaching practices in ALBE is what is often known as *the personal growth* or *personal voice model*. The key notion in this pedagogic approach is the sense that adult students attending ALBE classes are alienated from the wider society in general and from their own experience in particular. According to this view, the most liberating and significant thing ALBE can do for its students is to assist them to reconnect them with their own experience so they regain a sense of agency, authenticity and dignity. As a result this approach 'facilitates' this process by providing students with pretexts and contexts through which they can explore personal meanings and articulate feelings and experiences that are significant to them. The goal of this view of language and literacy is to assist students to find their own unique personal voice, a voice arising out of the uniqueness of their lived experience.

It is worth pointing out that this notion has degenerated during *'the therapeutic 1980s'* into vapid notions of self-esteem, assertiveness, time management and communication skills. These are what you get when Literacy for Self Expression is disassembled and recompiled as Literacy for Practical Purposes. Little wonder many educators from adjacent educational fields curl their lip at the very mention of the word 'personal' and begin to mutter 'macrame' under their breath.

It is important to trace the lineage of this pedagogic approach in a bit more detail. This approach to literacy is linked to *the central imperatives of the humanities* over the last 200 years or so. Crudely, we could say that at the beginning of the 19th Century there was a significant reaction against the conventionalism, ritualism, materialism and empiricism of 18th-Century Europe. This reaction, known as Romanticism, rejected the idea that the only way we could relate to reality was through science and countered with the idea of 'Bildung' or self-cultivation.[12]

These ideas, developed by Goethe, Schiller, Hegel and others, entered English educational culture and have remained the guiding impulse within the Humanities right up until the most recent attack on them by Deconstruction and Poststructuralism. Basically, Romanticism was an attempt to forge a new image of human beings as neither simply abstract cognitive rule-following machines on the one hand, nor mere physical bodies subject to the regimes of pain, pleasure and need on the other. Instead, Romanticism locates human beings precisely at the intersection of these two realms—the sensuous and the abstract—with the cultural life-task of integrating them.

Thus, the guiding idea of the Humanities is that certain types of reading and writing are key contexts for reconciling these contradictions, that reading and writing are key settings in which to acknowledge and rework these personal and metaphysical tensions, thus shaping a more robust and meaningful sense of self.

Second chance education

Another pedagogy informing our current repertoire of pedagogies in the ALBE field is what we could call *second chance education*. This is centred on the idea that adults whose schooling was unsatisfactory or is no longer adequate because of credentials inflation, have a right to return to study and upgrade their education and training.

This dimension of ALBE has been especially pushed into prominence by the women's movement and the entry of large numbers of women into the workforce. The 1980s has seen many women in ALBE classes; however as we enter the 1990s many men are now also turning up—voluntarily and involuntarily—to ALBE classes as their jobs are restructured or wiped out.

Critical literacy

Finally, a fourth strand informing ALBE as an educational field is what we could call *critical literacy*, a strand mainly associated with the writings and literacy work of Paulo Freire. The key concept in critical literacy is that adults already live within a cultural world and that literacy practices will inevitably articulate this cultural world or silence and delegitimate it. According to Freire, mainstream education necessarily expresses the culture of the dominant class in a society. So, to induct adults from subordinate classes or cultures into these dominant literacy practices will merely alienate them from their own cultures and train them to mimic the dominant culture.

From this analysis, Freire concludes that literacy practitioners should use texts, classroom practices and pedagogic processes that empower adult students by assisting them to articulate their own sociocultural location and identity and their economic and political interests within oppressive nation states. *This means literacy is inherently political and it should be positioned as the consciousness raising practice of community movements intent on asserting cultural identity and achieving social justice.* This concept of literacy as a medium for exploring and articulating cultural difference has been especially significant in social movements assembled around gender, race, ethnicity, and indigenous cultures.

PEDAGOGIC TRADITIONS

- functional literacy
- personal growth
- second chance education
- critical literacy

Conclusion

ALBE in the mid 1990s is a network of spaces and places in which these traditions of pedagogy can meet and enrich one another through debate, conflict and dialogue. This collection, *Writing Our Practice*, has attempted to give voice to the range of motives, values, stances, contexts, agendas, topics, students and settings that go to make up the spaces and places of ALBE in Victoria. The vitality and creativity of ALBE as a field will depend on the vitality and vigour of these debates, conflicts and dialogues. To have read the case studies presented here is to enter into these debates and discussions.

Although you will have found some instructional and procedural segments that can be adopted or adapted into your teaching, mostly you will have met other ALBE educators (like yourself) trying to give voice to their sense of themselves, their values, their relationships with their students; and to their efforts to make sense of their practice as an aspect of a committed praxis in shaping the realities and possibilities of the present and future.

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[1] This article is not a substitute for reading the description of the four literacies in *Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework: Draft Competence Statements for Adult Reading and Writing*, now redrafted and republished as 'Conceptions of Reading and Writing' in Section 4, 'Background Works' of the *CGE for Adults*. Because what I say here is mainly a cycle of reflective variations or improvisations on the theme of 'the four literacies', they will make more sense to those already familiar with existing descriptions of the four literacies. For those demanding more rigour, I have attempted a more academic exposition of the four literacies in 'Framing the field: adult literacies and the future', *Teaching English Literacy: A Project of National Significance on the Preservice Preparation of Teachers for Teaching English Literacy*, vol. 2, 1991, and for an earlier version, see 'Adult basic education: new directions for curriculum', in *Australian Journal of Reading*, March 1990, G. Pancini, P. Moraitis & R. McCormack.

[2] I myself think of it in Foucauldian terms as foregrounding 'the relationship of the self to the self', as focusing on technologies of the self, as the institution of a reflective ethical self. *Technologies of the Self*, eds Luther Martin, Huck Gutman & Patrick Hutton, London: Tavistock Publications, 1988.

[3] See E.D. Hirsch *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. Notice that many Australian conservatives (as distinct from economic rationalists) also invoke Literacy for Knowledge under the descriptions of 'cultural literacy' and 'academic excellence' in their opposition to competency-based definitions of literacy and education.

[4] Lemke, J. (1989), 'Making text talk', *Theory into Practice*, vol. 28, no. 2, p. 136.

[5] Note that the Streams within the Certificates foreground a definition of literacy in terms of macro-skills. This works against the functional definition of literacies and oralities as variant forms of engagement in social life, used to frame the earlier *Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework: Draft Competence Statements for Adult Reading and Writing*.

[6] Olson, David & Janet Astington (1989) 'Talking about text: how literacy contributes to thought', *Journal of Pragmatics*, p. 711.

[7] This listing adduces such theorists as Bakhtin, Foucault, Wittgenstein, Halliday, Habermas, Giddens, and Castoriadis.

[8] I have discussed the genres of public life at greater length in 'ABE — everywhere and nowhere?' in *Adult Basic Education Resource and Information Service (ARIS) Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1993

[9] See *Habermas and the Public Sphere* ed. Craig Calhoun, MIT, 1992 for a number of articles re-examining the emergence and meaning of the bourgeois public sphere.

[10] See *Critical Literacy: Politics, Praxis and the Postmodern* ed. Colin Lankshear and Peter McLaren, State University of New York Press: Albany, 1993 for a collection focused on these issues.

[11] This binary schema contrasting the coldness, inhumanity, anonymity, ritualised deadness, analytic technicality and alienation of the inauthentic literacy inflicted on 'us' by 'them' versus the richness, wholeness, spontaneity, warmth, meaningfulness, uniqueness and creativity of 'our own' authentic literacy underpins much theorising in the literacy field. The framework of four literacies has tried to acknowledge this tradition but contain its imperialism within the concept of Literacy for Self Expression.

[12] Two different and competing studies of this history are *Culture and Government*, Ian Hunter, Macmillan: London, 1989 and *Truth and Method*, H. G. Gadamer (2nd rev. ed.), Sheed & Ward: London, 1989.